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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this publication is to present methods designed to develop a greater awareness of the affective domain and to examine the way children's literature and poetry is used at school and at home. The 12 articles provide information about the following topics: developing an awareness of attitudes, examining approach-avoidance behaviors in reading, why teenagers do not read, the achievement of literacy through literature, children's reading interests, what constitutes appropriate literature for youth, fanciful literature, reading as an activity and as a theme in children's literature, the use of poetry with children, poetry and career education, and a strategy for improving teenagers' understanding and appreciation of poetry. (FL)

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USING LITERATURE & POETRY AFFECTIVELY

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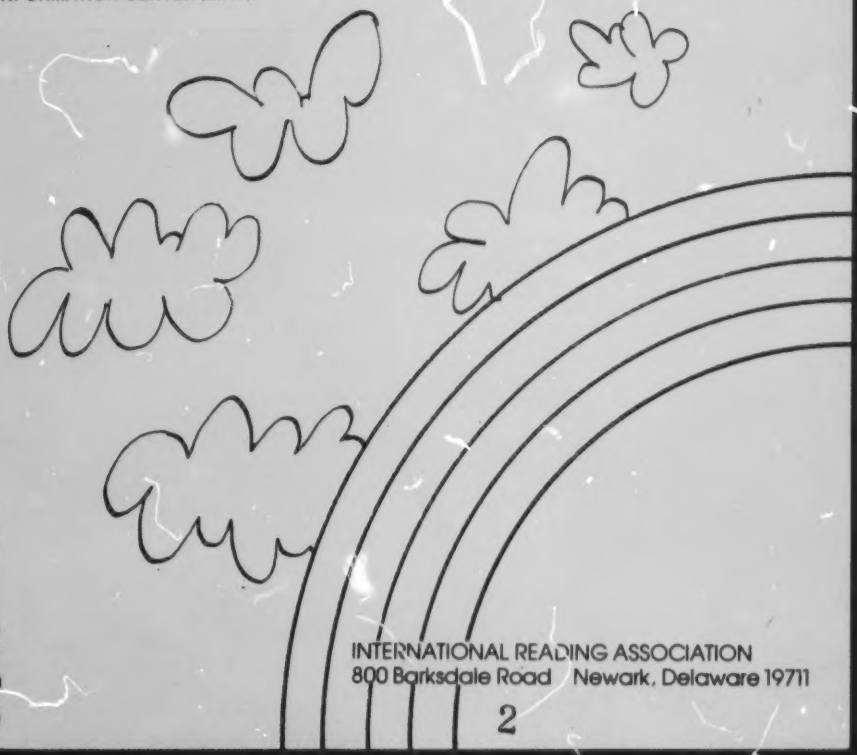

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Foreword

Promoting the reading habit is a primary goal of every good reading program. Reading teachers recognize the need to stress affective objectives as motivators for reading and as tools for skill building. They are aware that reading skills are largely developed through the act of reading itself.

Too often, the recognition of the importance of the affective component in the reading program and actual practice appear to be worlds apart. Children are frequently subjected to reading instruction that results in turning them off rather than turning them on to literature and poetry. Teachers become so consumed with managing the parts of their reading systems that they lose sight of the whole. Meanwhile, students engage in a constant battle of skill attacks, strategies, and targets. One wonders why more students do not view themselves as combatants in an assault on reading rather than explorers in the marvelous world of literature.

Acquiring and maintaining a sense of purpose and excitement in the reading program is not easily achieved. It requires effort and commitment on the part of the teacher. Knowing children's interests and channeling them toward reading is only one part of the process. Developing creative reading activities that stimulate an interest in reading is another part. Knowing both children and literature is still another. *Using Literature and Poetry Affectively* deals with all of these issues effectively.

Teachers, librarians, and administrators of reading programs will find this a useful volume, as they seek to provide a balance between cognitive and affective reading outcomes. The International Reading Association is pleased and grateful for this excellent contribution to the development of positive lifelong reading habits and attitudes.

Dorothy S. Strickland, *President*
International Reading Association
1978-1979

Introduction

Each year as I attend various reading conferences I can, with almost total assurance, be certain to hear at least one of the speakers relate the following tale.

> It seems that there were these two goats munching on reels of film in the backlots of a major motion picture studio. One goat remarked on how delicious the film was. The other goat replied, "Yes, it is good but I liked the book better."

This little tale is meant to reflect our hope, as reading educators, that school age children will prefer, or at least hold in equal esteem, the entertainment provided by books as opposed to that of television and other visual media.

Unfortunately, this hope appears to be unfulfilled and some might say even unrealistic. Although we often speak of creating a "love of books" and encouraging our children to become "lifelong readers," one can question whether we do enough in our schools and homes to seriously compete with the other media. Various studies demonstrate the enormous impact of television upon children. This impact ranges from the time spent watching television, as compared to reading, to perseverance in problem-solving situations. Additionally, we are aware of the fact that the majority of adults, including teachers, do no read regularly for leisure.

It has been suggested that television's appeal to children is much greater than that of books, thus the difficulty in maintaining children's interest in reading for leisure. However, if we view the world of children's literature from an historical perspective, we recognize that we not only have a wealth of written material of very high quality but that children have been greatly entertained for generations by this material.

Perhaps the major problem facing educators and parents alike is in our understanding of how children's attitudes and interests

towards literature and poetry are developed and maintained. This difficulty can be overcome through developing a greater awareness of the affective domain and by examining the way we use children's literature and poetry in our schools and homes. The purpose of this volume is to contribute to our understanding and methods of examining children's attitudes and to present various views which may facilitate more effective uses of literature and poetry.

This volume is comprised of three parts. Part One is concerned with attitudes toward reading: what they are, how they might be examined, and some suggestions as to improving them. In Part Two children's literature and interests are examined, as well as various uses of literature in the school program. The final section, Part Three, takes a look at how we might use poetry more effectively.

The majority of articles appearing in this volume were presented at the twenty-first and twenty-second annual conventions of the International Reading Association. One article was presented at the Sixth World Congress on Reading and three articles were reproduced from journals of the International Reading Association.

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Part One

EXAMINING ATTITUDES

In order to begin to use literature and poetry effectively, in an affective sense, one must first have some understanding of children's attitudes. The opening article points out this need for awareness by examining some reasons as to why attitudes may be neglected in our reading programs. Shapiro goes on to suggest a process of individual introspection concerning factors in our classrooms which might be related to the development and maintenance of positive attitudes toward reading.

In the second article, Riley discusses the potential dangers in this new focus on attitudes. He presents a less complex definition of attitudes toward reading and suggests a simple procedure for determining what children's attitudes might be by examining their reading behaviors rather than their stated beliefs on some measure of reading attitudes. Through his presentation of case studies, Riley demonstrates that positive attitudes can be developed systematically yet simply.

The concluding article centers our attention on adolescents and their interest in reading. Gentile and McMillan discuss a series of factors which might negatively affect the reading behavior of adolescents and suggest material which, if used properly, could promote the desire to read.

Developing an Awareness of Attitudes

Jon E. Shapiro
University of British Columbia

One of the more perplexing dilemmas in reading instruction is found in the area of children's attitudes toward reading. This dilemma involves the progress, in many children, from an initial enthusiasm for reading to an increasing disdain or even dislike for reading.

A friend recently told me of his daughter's enthusiasm on her first day of school. She was bubbling with excitement over the prospect of learning magic, the fact that she was going to learn to read. Now, some two years later, this young girl rarely picks up a book. Reading has become work, something required in school but certainly not done for enjoyment. Is this behavior an exception? Informal observations as well as indications in the literature seem to indicate that, unfortunate as it may be, many children "turn off" to reading during their elementary school years.

Studies conducted with preschoolers indicate that three-to five-year-olds have positive attitudes toward reading. When a group of 178 preschoolers were asked "Do you like to read?" over 87 percent responded affirmatively. When asked "Would you like to be able to read?" 94 percent responded positively (*7*). In another study (*8*), 95 percent of preschoolers responded positively to the question "Do you like to have stories read to you?"

Informal polling of over 100 primary grade children, brought to the University of British Columbia for demonstration teaching purposes, has revealed rather distressing results. The children were asked whether they liked to read or found reading enjoyable. A startling 62 percent replied negatively. Additionally, a recent study conducted with grade two children revealed that almost 78 percent decreased significantly in favorable responses on a measure of attitudes toward reading after six months of classroom instruction (*10*).

What Is an Attitude?

Before we can develop an awareness of children's attitudes toward reading, we must have some understanding of what an attitude is purported to be. This can be a rather difficult task since the literature of social science presents many diverse definitions of the term (*12*). However, it would appear that the most widespread definition in use is that of Allport (*1*). He stated that

> An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

For reading educators, Allport's definition is quite useful. The key to his definition would be not only that an attitude is learned but that attitudes exert an "...influence upon the individual's response...." This attitude, according to Good (*5*), would have to be inferred from children's overt responses, nonverbal as well as verbal. Therefore, responses in terms of reading behavior would not only be the children's answers to the question "Do you like to read?" but also their nonverbal responses, their demonstrated interests in reading. One could say then that a child with a positive attitude toward reading would be a child who states that s/he likes to read and demonstrates this attitude by reading for enjoyment.

Attitudes and Reading

What causes children to develop poor attitudes toward reading? Failure or frustration in the learning process almost certainly accounts for negative attitudes. However, these factors affect only a small portion of school populations. What, then, are the factors which account for the academically successful child's dislike for reading?

Many educators have postulated that methods of instruction are to blame. Others, such as the early childhood educator who stated, "The penalty the child pays for becoming six is to be fed a two-year-old diet," seem to fault the content of the materials we use for instruction (*6*). But are these two factors really at the heart of the problem?

Methods of instruction, especially in the primary grades, have changed dramatically over the years. From an almost universal reliance upon the oral reading semicircle we now see many teachers utilizing whatever works best for the individual child; in other words, methods have become more eclectic. We now have individualized prescriptive programs, language experience programs, and many others, in addition to the basal reader. Although methods, if inappropriate to the learning styles of the children, may contribute to

a negative feeling toward reading, it seems unlikely that methods alone could be a substantial factor.

Instructional materials, primarily basal readers, have received much criticism in recent years. These complaints have centered on sociocultural issues, as well as on the interest or appeal of the materials. Although many of these criticisms are legitimate, a perusal of recent basal readers indicates that publishers are responding to these issues. In addition, with the more prolific use of different methodologies such as the language experience approach, which utilizes the child's language as a basis of reading selections, and the individualized approach with its emphasis on self-selection of materials, the factor of the inadequacy of reading materials cannot be considered to be very substantial in seeking the answer to the decline in positive attitudes toward reading.

Perhaps the real problem lies below such surface issues as methodologies and materials. When we examine any problem or issue, it is usually necessary to start with the basic foundation rather than beginning with individual aspects of the problem. It seems that a logical beginning to the whole problem of children's attitudes toward reading lies in our own philosophy of reading and our own reading attitudes.

Developmental reading textbooks, as well as introductory courses in reading, usually begin with a definition of reading. This definition often serves as a conceptual base which will guide teachers in their instruction and in the selection of classroom materials. An examination of these textbooks reveals little consensus as to what constitutes reading, but we can generally find three types of definitions. First, there are the definitions which state that reading is primarily the interpretation of experiences. Second, there are definitions which purport that reading is solely the act of interpreting symbols. Finally, there are definitions which combine the former two definitions, either in total equity or in some ration (*4*). Rarely, as part of a definition of reading do we find mention of the affective domain.

A perusal of specialized textbooks reveals only one source which includes the affective domain in the definition of the reading process. Smith and Barrett (*11*:100) state,

> ... the effort expended in the perceptual and intellectual acts is partially controlled by the reader's interest in a specific selection and by his attitude toward reading in general.

Nowhere has a definition of reading been found which indicates that reading is a worthwhile leisure activity which provides enjoyment and expands knowledge, awareness, and sensitivities. Perhaps this is too simplistic. Surely we are all aware of the enjoyable

and beneficial aspects of reading. However, it is equally possible that, as teachers, when we lose sight of the affective qualities of reading, we tend to view and teach reading simply as a skills acquisition process.

The second factor, at the beginning of the search for an understanding of some children's negative feelings toward reading, is our own attitudes toward reading. One method which might be useful in inferring teachers' attitudes toward reading would be to examine their reading habits. Although there has been very little research in this area, there are indications that teachers, as a group, do not read frequently for enjoyment or expansion of knowledge. Surveys (*2, 3*) of teachers' reading of pragmatic materials indicate that teachers do not do much professional reading. In a study of teachers' reading of nonprofessional books it was found that barely half of the teachers surveyed had read one or two books during the year preceding the study. Twelve percent of the sample had not read even a single book (*9*). While these studies cannot be considered definitive, they do indicate that some members of the teaching profession certainly do not "practice what they teach."

An additional indication of the lack of importance teachers attach to their own reading can be found in many classrooms during periods set aside for sustained silent reading. Too often, during this period, teachers can be found marking papers, wrestling with the class register, or doing almost anything else but reading, as the children are, for enjoyment.

Much of what children learn, especially about attitudes, is derived from incidental learning and through imitation of appropriate role models. Therefore, it is extremely important that teachers effectively communicate to children, both verbally and nonverbally, that reading is enjoyable. The nonverbal communication is often a neglected aspect of the teaching process. We must keep in mind that children who are told that reading is enjoyable and see that the teacher finds reading enjoyable are receiving consistent messages about reading. On the other hand, children who are told that reading is enjoyable and who do not see the teacher reading are receiving conflicting messages that cannot encourage the development of positive attitudes toward reading.

What Can Be Done?

It seems apparent, then, that the first important step in developing positive attitudes toward reading is probably one of introspection. We need to examine our own beliefs and attitudes toward reading. If we have a positive attitude and read for enjoyment and information, it is more likely that these feelings and behaviors can be communicated to our students. In other words, we must be

visible models of positive attitudes toward reading.

Following this process of introspection we can then begin to examine our teaching styles, methods of instruction, and materials which we use for instruction in our classrooms. Some useful questions which teachers attending workshops have suggested for this examination are

1. Are the goals of my program and my expectations for the children realistic and achievable?
2. Is my grouping flexible so that individual interests and needs can be met?
3. Is my program varied enough to maintain interest?
4. Are my students aware of the reasons why they meet with various reading groups and are they aware of the purpose of each lesson?
5. Are my students aware of the reasons for reading basal readers and the differences in function between these books and the books they might wish to read?
6. Do I maintain an adequate and varied selection of books in the classroom?
7. Do my students seem really interested in my lessons?

These questions can serve as the springboard for developing an awareness of our own thoughts on the reading process, of our instructional procedures, and of our classroom environment as it relates to the encouragement of positive attitudes toward reading. After we have become more aware of the interrelationships among ourselves, the reading process, and the ways we teach reading, we can begin the arduous but rewarding task of developing behaviors and activities which will communicate to the children that reading is enjoyable.

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Examining Approach-Avoidance Behaviors in Reading

James D. Riley
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In the recent past, attitudes toward reading have received increased attention in the literature. Instruments have been developed to assess attitudes toward reading at primary (*3, 11, 12*) and secondary levels (*7, 8*). Efforts have been made to devise a taxonomy which describes the affective domain as it relates to reading, including interrelated factors of attitudes and attitude formation (*4*). Techniques and strategies have been described which are designed to develop positive attitudes toward reading (*1*).

These efforts show potential and promise. But, in any area of learning where new developments take place, there is always the danger that one may make matters more complex than they really are. This sometimes happens in reading, where there may be attempts to teach skills that are contained in a long list of skills which supposedly reflect what "reading" is. As a result, there is a tendency for students to learn the skills as separate entities and then be unable to put them all together to make for smooth and efficient reading.

In the same way, there is the danger that attitudes may be fragmented into a series of subfactors, each of which must be "taught" in some fashion. What may happen is that students will learn each of these "attitude skills" and be able to evidence that learning on some test of attitude but still not have a positive attitude toward reading. The paradox is that while processes underlying attitudes are complex, instruction to develop these processes must be simple and manageable.

The mere assessment of attitudes does not always lead to improvement in attitude. Most instruments developed to assess attitudes are based on responses to statements or pictures representing reading and reading related activities. Unfortunately, such assessment does not occur within the context in which attitude toward reading largely

develops—encounters with reading and reading related tasks in the classroom. Neither does such assessment necessarily point to strategies for developing positive attitudes toward reading. In order to determine the attitudes of students and to devise strategies for developing positive attitudes, we need to consider the contexts in which the attitudes are formed. We need to have a framework for designing instruction which is based on a simple definition of attitude. This article will offer a simple definition of attitude toward reading, its application in the classroom, and how it might lead to strategies for developing positive attitudes.

A Simple Definition of Attitudes toward Reading

A well-known definition of attitude which gives some indication of the complexity of attitudes and which can serve as a basis for the development of a simple definition is the one offered by Allport cited by MacGuire (2:142).

> It is a mental and neural state of readiness to respond, organized through experience exerting a directive and/or dynamic influence on behavior.

This is a complex definition indeed. MacGuire (*9*) offers a lengthy discussion of the complexity of each of five aspects of this definition: 1) mental and neural state, 2) readiness to respond, 3) organized, 4) experience, and 5) influence on behavior. While it is not the purpose here to describe each of these aspects in detail, several assumptions can be made related to formulating a simple definition. First, attitudes are learned. Second, as long as attitudes are learned or acquired there is the possibility that we can have an effect on them. In fact, some define attitudes, in part, as "acquired behavioral dispositions." It may be that, in the past, the reason we have not developed systematic attempts to improve attitudes is that we have attended too much to the "mental and neural" aspects of attitudes, aspects that exist in what psychologists call the inscrutable "black box" of the mind. To put it more simply, we have had a tendency to do little about poor attitudes because they appear to be so complex in nature.

If, then, we assume that attitudes have some effect on behavior, we have a basis for defining attitudes in a simple manner, useful to the classroom teacher. That is, we can infer the nature of students' attitudes from their behavioral responses during reading and reading related activities. An effective way of utilizing behavioral responses as a basis for determining attitude toward learning was offered by Mager (*10*). Mager defined attitudes in terms of approach and avoidance responses. That is, individuals evidence a positive attitude

toward learning if they willingly engage in or "approach" learning tasks. They evidence negative attitudes by "avoiding" such tasks. Thus, Mager's definition can serve as a basis for defining attitude toward reading in the following manner:

> Attitude toward reading is a tendency to respond to reading and related tasks by either avoiding them or approaching them: a) a poor attitude toward reading is a tendency to respond, habitually or selectively, to such tasks by avoiding them; b) a positive attitude toward reading is a tendency to habitually or selectively respond to such tasks by approaching them.

Thus, the responses or behaviors of students can be classified as avoidance (poor attitudes) or approach (positive attitudes) behaviors. A simple definition!

To illustrate how such behaviors might be indicative of attitude toward reading, it is useful to examine several case descriptions.

1. Fred is in seventh grade. During observation he exhibits the following behaviors: He often asks questions about words and meanings. During his free time, he reads but rarely finishes a book. He does not appear anxious during discussions about material read.
2. Ophelia is in ninth grade. She is easily distracted from reading tasks. She tries hard during writing tasks but usually cannot finish them. She is reluctant to read in class and usually does not ask questions. During free time, she never reads.
3. Ralph is in eleventh grade. He almost never brings his book to class. When he does, it appears as if it has been unused. During class discussions he often wisecracks, attempting to take over the discussion. During free time, he reads voraciously in highly technical manuals and magazines. In discussion of his independent reading, it is apparent that he has a clear grasp of content.
4. Maxine is in first grade. She often responds in class discussions of reading but is rarely correct. She will occasionally choose a book to read during free time but quickly changes to another activity. She often chooses books that are too difficult for her. She often asks questions about words that she does not know, but rarely remembers them.
5. Betty is in seventh grade. She volunteers often in class, usually with correct responses. She is not afraid to say that she does not understand or does not know. She reads a variety of materials. During library period, she is usually buried in a book. She will often bring books from home or the public library. She likes to write about what she reads. The material that she chooses to read is often easy to read.
6. Jack is in sixth grade. He will bring his book to class but spends much time staring at it during reading time. He usually does not

participate in class discussions and only answers easy questions. During reading time he will occasionally read but usually likes to draw.

Table 1 shows a classification of the behavioral responses of the students to reading and reading related activities. The classification only serves to identify those behaviors that indicate approach or avoidance behaviors. Observations of approach and avoidance behaviors, however, give only gross ideas of whether students have positive or negative attitudes toward reading. Therefore, one cannot simply count the number of approach and avoidance behaviors observed. The process of drawing inferences involves determining the quality of the response as well as the quantity.

Table 1

	Approach	*Avoidance*
Case 1 (Fred)	ask questions; found reading; does not appear anxious	rarely finishes a book
Case 2 (Ophelia)	tries hard	easily distracted; never reads during free time; cannot finish writing tasks; reluctant to read; does not ask questions
Case 3 (Ralph)	reads technical manuals; clear grasp of (above) content	never brings book; clean book; attempts to take over class
Case 4 (Maxine)	often responds; occasionally reads; continually asks questions	rarely correct; changes to another activity; chooses books too difficult; rarely remembers
Case 5 (Betty)	volunteers and is correct; not afraid to say she does not know; buried in a book; brings books from home; likes to read	reads only easy materials
Case 6 (Jack)	brings book; answers easy questions; occasionally reads	stares at book; rarely participates

Contexts of Attitudes toward Reading

In judging the quality of the responses, we are seeking underlying instructional causes of attitudes in the contexts within which these attitudes are formulated. Six questions need to be asked concerning the behavioral responses of these students during reading

and related tasks in order to draw inferences and judge the attitudes underlying these responses: 1) Does reading help meet the goals of the student? 2) Does reading help meet the learning goals of the school? 3) Are there models provided for reading? 4) Does the student learn through reading? 5) Does the student have the abilities that may be required in the classroom? 6) Does the student know how (procedurally) to do what is asked?

We can infer the answers to these questions by examining the behaviors of each of the cases presented. The questions serve as a framework for inferring the student's attitudes toward reading. While it is not the purpose here to provide a list of activities for developing positive attitudes, some suggestions in developing positive attitudes will be offered only to illustrate that the definition and the six questions can lead to development of positive attitudes toward reading.

Fred. Fred often asks questions, reads during his free time, and asks about words and word meanings, but he rarely finishes a book. On the whole, it would appear that Fred has a positive attitude. However, he rarely finishes the books that he reads. He may not have the ability to select a book that is suitable for him, or the books that are available may be too long or too difficult. Reading may be so laborious for him that he cannot get through a book. The fact that he frequently asks about words and word meanings may indicate a need to build his vocabulary.

At any rate, one can hypothesize that his "avoidance" of finishing a book indicates some degree of poor attitude. Some things that might be tried would include providing a variety of shorter, easier books, suggesting word collecting activities, and reading stories to him. The aims of these activities are to sustain the degree of positive attitude that he exhibits and to remove those obstacles that prevent him from finishing the books that he selects.

Ophelia. Ophelia exhibits what may well be an extremely negative attitude toward reading and reading related tasks. The fact that she 1) is easily distracted, 2) cannot finish writing tasks, 3) is reluctant to read, 4) does not ask questions, and 5) does not read during free time indicates a pervasive pattern of avoidance responses. One can infer from this pattern that she may not have the ability to do what is expected of her. If this is indeed true, then reading helps meet neither her own personal goals nor the school's goals. Moreover, she is not learning through reading. When further evidence was gathered as to her reading ability, it was found that she lacked some basic reading skills and she was referred for remedial help.

Unfortunately, for many students like Ophelia, this does not solve the problem. Such students are still faced with reading in the regular classroom. What might be done for students who have severe

problems is to stop requiring them to engage in reading material that is too difficult for them. They can learn what is expected of them through oral activities, group discussions, and listening activities. Later, if they make enough progress in remediation, they might begin to read on a limited but increased basis. However, if students do not make progress, it does little good to force them to read orally and attempt to discuss what they have read—a common practice in secondary schools for students with Ophelia's difficulties. These negative attitudes toward reading may become negative attitudes toward school, and students may give up "trying hard."

Ralph. Ralph seems to evidence a negative attitude toward school based reading. He does not bring his book to class and it appears that he does not read it outside of class either. He "wisecracks" often, attempting to take over class discussion. However, he does do outside reading in technical manuals. He does understand what he reads.

From this description of Ralph's reading, it seems that Ralph can learn through reading and probably has the ability to accomplish what is expected of him in the classroom setting. It does appear that a certain type of reading material helps him meet his personal goals but does not help him meet the school's goals. The problem here seems to be that the school's goals are at odds with Ralph's goals. It might be possible that Ralph's outside reading is not valued within the school. Perhaps Ralph could become the "technical" expert or resource person at least within some of the classes that he attends.

Unfortunately, the secondary schools are full of students like Ralph whose motivation and personal goals spur them to read material that is not valued within the school. Forcing him to comply without rewarding his personal efforts is only counterproductive. It only reinforces and maintains avoidance to school-based reading situations. Students like Ralph receive more personal satisfaction from outside reading than from reading that is aimed at meeting the school's goals.

Maxine. According to her behavioral responses, Maxine is to some degree similar to Fred. She asks questions about words and meanings but does not remember them. She will choose to read during free time but will quickly switch to another activity. She chooses books that are too difficult. She responds in class but is rarely "correct."

By her responses, it might be said that Maxine is going through the motions of meeting certain expectations that she thinks exist in the classroom. She is doing all of those things that children are supposed to do. One clue to understanding her behavior is her continuing incorrect responses in class discussion. Apparently, there are "correct" responses to be expected in such discussion. She believes a good reader reads to find "correct answers" to hypothetical

questions. Such a view may be a result of the nature of the instruction that she is receiving. Her inability to remember words that she asks about may reflect certain deficiencies but it may also suggest that the words have no intrinsic meaning or interest for her. She is, again, only going through the motions in asking about the words. In doing so, she is not "learning through reading."

With Maxine, it may be possible to expand her "model" of the good reader by doing such things as reading stories to her in which she speculates about "what is going to happen next" halfway through the story. By doing so, she may begin to see that there is not always one answer to hypothetical questions. Also, she might be encouraged to write her own stories (dictated) in a language experience format. Through such an approach, she uses words that she knows. The effect of these two approaches would be to expand her view of reading by giving her a broader idea of what "reading" is.

Betty. Betty exhibits a pattern of approach responses to reading. She reads often, she volunteers and is not afraid to say she does not understand, and she writes about what she reads. On the surface, it appears that the only avoidance behavior is that the books she chooses are easy books. However, this is not necessarily an avoidance behavior (e.g. avoiding difficult books) in that most good readers will choose easy books to read, if given the opportunity. Moreover, she does volunteer often with "correct responses" so that it appears she is "approaching" the presumably more difficult classroom assignments.

It still may be possible to give her some guidance in higher reading skills such as critical and creative reading in material that demands such reading. Her willingness to admit that she does not know or understand indicates that she may be receptive to such guidance.

Jack. Jack manifests a strong pattern of avoidance responses. He only stares at his book during reading time. He usually does not participate in class discussion. He would rather draw than read.

From this description, it would appear that Jack may have some basic skill deficiencies. He is obviously not learning through reading. This assumption would bear further investigation. However, it might be possible to use Jack's willingness to draw as a basis for dictated captions or even short descriptions that could be attached to the drawings. In asking Jack to reread the captions and descriptions, it would be possible to get an idea of some basic skill abilities. At the same time, it would personalize "reading" for Jack in that reading would be associated with an activity through which he apparently receives some personal reward.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the descriptions of these cases and the ensuing discussion that efforts to develop positive attitudes toward reading depend on the identification of approach and avoidance behaviors and a judgement as to the quality of these behaviors. Moreover, each set of observations and inferences must be considered in light of the larger context in which the attitudes are formulated and the behaviors appear. The questions only serve as a framework for the "inferring" process.

It must be said that the approach and avoidance definition of attitude toward reading only serves as a basis for inferring attitudes. It does not deny the underlying complexity of attitudes and attitude formation. There may be factors that go far beyond the classroom setting and deny the strict application of the definition. Moreover, the observation, classifying of behaviors, and inferring of attitude complement the use of attitude inventories. However, the use of the definition and the questions that serve as a basis for the inference process is based on a consideration of the larger context within which the contact occurs between the student and the printed page. It provides a framework for determining where students are and where they should be, and a way to get them there. It will keep the development of positive attitude toward reading simple but systematic. It will make it difficult to use the complexities of attitude and attitude formation as an excuse for not considering attitude toward reading an important factor in reading instruction. If the definition and the inference process are used effectively, then students will be more likely to learn through reading and enjoy doing so.

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Why Won't Teenagers Read?

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One of the more disconcerting problems facing teachers in the secondary schools today is not only their students' inability to read but students' general lack of interest, indifference, or sheer rejection of reading. These pupils are asking, "Why read at all?" Frequently a sense of acquiescent numbness overcomes these youngsters when reading assignments are made.

Part of the problem of developing students' interest in reading is a direct result of persistently posing the question, "Why *can't* they read?" Corrective programs have focused on diagnosing deficits and prescribing remediation. Following the medical model of treating the symptoms and not the disease, major efforts are launched to determine the intellectual or physiological basis of a student's reading deficiency. This diagnostic/prescriptive approach is not altogether without success, but it fails drastically to promote an individual's desire to read.

To understand why many teenagers will not read is to take the first step toward sound instructional methods and materials. The following list presents ten factors that contribute heavily to this reluctant reader syndrome. These are supplemented with a number of practical instructional alternatives designed for use by the teacher of reading or the content area teacher at the secondary level.

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- By the time many students reach high school they may equate reading with ridicule, failure, or exclusively school-related tasks. Often these youngsters have never experienced joy in reading.

These students might profit from exposure to a wide variety of reading material, from which they may select or reject on the basis of personal interest. They really will read difficult articles and books with high levels of comprehension and appreciation while rejecting very simple material that bores them. A recent survey at the University of Iowa revealed that most adolescents between fifteen and nineteen prefer:

Science fiction
The supernatural
Mystery and intrigue
Love stories or books dealing with various forms of terminal illness
Factual crime cases

Many of the titles they rated highly were adult best-sellers—*Jaws* (*1*), *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (*12*), and *Sunshine* (*13*). For the first time in the three year history of the University of Iowa's "Most Popular Young Adult's Book List," a book of poetry was included—*Poems by Richard Thomas* (*21*), TV's John Boy of *The Waltons*.

- Some pupils are not excited by ideas. Many are driven to experience life directly rather than through reading.

They must understand that this limits their experiences. Adolescents are drawn to a myriad of vicarious experiences through television—reading experiences can be equally rewarding:

Deep sea diving
Piloting or jumping out of an airplane
Becoming a fire fighter, detective, or police officer
Being a jockey or other professional athlete
Sailing around the world
Driving Formula I race cars
Competing in the Olympics
Fighting in a war
Being president or other elected official

The individual's real and vicarious experiences are inextricable and often serve to elevate and intensify one another.

- A great number of adolescents do not want to sit, and in some cases are incapable of sitting, for prolonged periods.

Get these pupils out of their seats and involve them in doing something "active" that requires reading. Implement material found in various "how to" sources like *Popular Mechanics, Popular Science, Decorating and Craft Ideas, Favorite Recipes for Home Economics Teachers.* Have youngsters work with short stories: *Teen-Age Tales* (*18*), *Short Story Masterpieces* (*23*), or *Two Minute Mysteries* (*16*), and its sequel *More Two Minute Mysteries* (*17*).

Other material, easily adapted to classroom dramatizations, role-playing, and pantomime activities, includes:

Teen-Age Ghost Stories (*7*)
Teen-Age Outer Space Stories (*8*)
Teen-Age Underwater Adventures (*19*)
Teen-Age Suspense Stories (*5*)
Teen-Age Party Time Stories (*9*)
Teen-Age Wild Animal Stories (*20*)
Teen-Age Secret Agent Stories (*10*)
Teen-Age Plays for Classroom Reading (*4*)
Teen-Age Spy Stories (*11*)
Teen-Age Mexican Stories (*25*)

Allow young people opportunities to act out a character role or a specific situation from these narratives. Give them a story to read with an important part missing—with written clues to the precise location of the missing part. Have members of the class assemble recipes for cooking and preparing various "cultural" dishes or home favorites that play up the relationship between their own lives and an out-of-your-seat activity that requires reading.

- Adolescence is a time of intense egocentrism. Teenagers are preoccupied with themselves, their problems, families, sexual roles, and material possessions.

During this period of development, youngsters experience tremendous "growing pains" in their effort to come to terms with demands made of them by parents, teachers, and peers. Three sources for appropriate books are

Books for You (*24*). Two thousand titles in forty-five categories and subcategories, including indexes by title and author, and a complete list of the publishers' addresses.

Books, Young People, and Reading Guidance (*15*). This entire work is devoted to reading and adolescence, but chapter five contains

lists of books that relate directly to the sundry needs of youth. It is an invaluable aid in relating reading experiences to the following teenage problems and concerns:

The need to be like others
The need for emotional independence from adults
The need for wholesome family relationships
The need to learn adult roles
The need for peer status
The need to understand the physical world
The need for success
The need for assuming social responsibility
The need for a philosophy of life
The need for beauty
The need for fun and relaxation

Books and the Teen-Age Reader (2), revised and updated, contains all new bibliographies and a special chapter on ethnic literature.

- Many young people demand to be entertained. They have developed little understanding or appreciation of intrinsic rewards, such as the sense of personal accomplishment that comes about through prolonged effort.

These motives leave many teachers and parents at a loss as to why or how reading instruction should be presented. Students' interests in other media cannot be overlooked. Critical reading skills can be developed through them—the same "thinking processes" are required to interpret and analyze a speech delivered by a politician before the television cameras as would be employed to read an account written in the newspaper. Though the viewer has the advantage of watching facial and gesticular movements and responding to the differences in tone and vocal expression, the reader has the opportunity to make up his own mind as to precisely what the candidate "might" have said, as opposed to being told what he really "meant" to say by one of the network's political analysts.

In terms of the number of hours devoted to a particular activity, next to sleep, watching TV predominates in a youngster's life. Teenagers should realize how controlled they allow themselves to be by the program schedules of the television industry. Reading offers a personal selection and a variety not available to a captive viewing audience.

- Many students are pressured at home as well as in school to read! read! read! Persistent stress proves counterproductive.

Parents and teachers are most effective as models. Pressuring anyone to read can lead to a loss of inclination. A graduate student (herself a teacher of reading) testified: "We pressured our younger boy to read and almost turned him against reading altogether. When the pressure was lifted we discovered that Randy, like most teenagers, read what he wanted to read. At present, he's involved with plants and constructing his own greenhouse—his reading interests have been absorbed by botany. Swimming has become a major athletic attraction for him. On weekends he has been teaching several younger children, and he has several books from which he studies the proper techniques for teaching swimming."

- Many young people grow up in an atmosphere void of reading material. The "significant people" in their lives may not read or have any appreciation for learning by reading. These values are handed down.

Values can be altered! If reading material is not available and parents do not provide models, the school must serve as the example. Paperback books, newspapers, comic books, magazines are essential: *Newsweek, People, Time, Horse and Rider, National Geographic, National Geographic World, Field and Stream, Sports Illustrated, Outdoor Life, Seventeen, Glamour, Vogue, Woman's Day, Ms, Motorcycle World, Hot Rod, Reader's Digest, Mad, National Lampoon.* These "soft" materials should be available to students on a check out basis, even to take home and share with the family.

- Reading may be considered an "antisocial" activity.

Because most teenagers seek peer approval, they sometimes forego their own individual needs and interests in an effort to become part of the "in" crowd. Group reading activities should emphasize interaction and discussion. There is tremendous potential for growth and development through the sharing of ideas and experiences with the teacher and other members of the class. Material can be adapted to include group practice in word recognition, comprehension, and critical reading activities.

By involving himself or herself in these group activities and by reading to the class, the reading teacher underscores the importance and the beauty of reading. Too much emphasis on programmed reading materials or "individual" work in reading tends to depersonalize it.

- Many classroom texts and supplementary reading materials are dull to look at.

If texts are not illustrated or designed to attract the reader, young people can collect pictures and photographs or create drawings of their own. They can fashion collages to represent specific concepts presented in the text. Ask the students to pictorialize poetry, modern songs, short stories, or TV programs and motion pictures.

Ask the group to develop an ideal minitext highlighting a particular unit, including varied typographical styles and illustrations. As an example, the class might decide to underline the main idea(s) in red or italicize them. The significant or subordinate details might appear in various colored type. Abstract or difficult vocabulary could be defined in page margins.

Designing multicolored charts and graphs would help students understand technical data. Pictures or illustrations ought to be interspersed throughout the text's pages or regularly presented among the printed subdivisions.

- Some adolescents view reading as a part of the adult world and automatically reject it.

Give students many opportunities to develop materials of their own. Encourage them to create and dramatize plays based on their personal experiences. Urging them to pantomime short stories, songs, or literary articles and commentaries forces them to interpret the material with a personal touch. Plans might be developed to direct their own TV and radio broadcasts (including sound effects and background music). Episodes might consist of some of their current favorites such as "Welcome Back, Kotter," "Sanford and Son," or "Happy Days." They can be stimulated to write their own newspapers or news articles, to originate a magazine, or to produce humorous material such as cartoons or comics detailing ludicrous events and utilizing witty or cant language.

A wide range of students reject reading because of these ten factors as well as because of visual, auditory, or physiological disorders that create discomfort when they try to read. An ideal program must include what we know about human learning and habit formation. A total effort in the classroom is needed to provide pupils with reading experiences that fully engage their emotions as well as their intellects. Hard evidence must be presented to youth that reading is not something only certain people can do or can enjoy doing.

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Part Two

USING LITERATURE

Charlotte Huck opens this section with a discussion of the achievement of literacy through literature. Although literature cannot compete with television, Huck believes that literature provides children with more personal choice in their lives than does television. She affirms the belief that literature not only has a place in the reading program but that it has an integral place in the lives of children. To Huck, literature educates the heart as well as the mind.

Children's reading interests are the focus of the article by Helen Huus. Various factors are discussed which affect what children choose to read. Huus concludes that the charting of interests by teachers is not sufficient. Teachers must also examine their roles in expanding children's information base concerning literature and in stimulating children's curiosity.

Articles by Livingston and by Snyder tackle the question of what is appropriate literature for youth. Both argue that realism and relevance are essential components of literature if books are to be meaningful and of interest to children. Fanciful literature, on the other hand, is discussed by Salesi, who argues that this type of literature requires more from the reader than other forms of literature. Thus, various aspects of works of fantasy are explored so that teachers may examine the methods they employ to develop understanding when using this type of material.

Finally, in an article based upon the belief that children should be exposed to appropriate role models for reading, Parker presents books which contain the act of reading as a valued activity. A selected, annotated bibliography is included as a resource for teachers, librarians, and parents.

No Wider than the Heart Is Wide

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The common use of the term *literacy* in this country is usually prefaced by the word *mere*—we talk about mere literacy or a kind of minimal or functional ability to read and write that will enable an individual to just barely survive in our modern society. This definition of literacy has grown out of despair and failure on the part of teachers. We haven't been successful in teaching some children to read and so in desperation we try to provide a little survival kit for life; we teach them to read street signs, help wanted ads, and recipes and to fill out job applications and welfare notices. Certainly we want to go beyond this kind of functional literacy.

There is another group of students who are literate, who know how to read but just never do, for they have never found any pleasure in reading. In England they refer to these students as ex-literates and I have called them our "illiterate literates." Certainly we want to go *beyond* this kind of literacy.

An older use of the term literacy, which is still very current in certain parts of the world, refers to the fully literate person: the autonomous reader who reads widely on a variety of subjects; who makes rational decisions based upon an enlightened view of all sides of a controversy; the humane man or woman of letters who can entertain new ideas, accept different points of view and through reading can enter into the joys and hopes, the sorrow and despair of the world across time and space. In a very real sense it is impossible to go *beyond* this definition of literacy, but we can make it our goal. There is only one way to achieve it and that is through developing a love of good books. Children will never become fully literate persons unless they discover delight in books. The route, then, to full literacy is through literature.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, I hope to help the reader discover the power of literature to educate the human heart and to develop the fully literate person. Second, I hope to convince the reader of the power of literature to help children learn to read, to become readers.

Literature and Life

All of us can remember reading books that have made a difference in our lives, that have changed us as human beings, changed how we look at life and the world and the nature of things.

Two adult books that I read last year made me aware once again of the power of the written word to shock and to strengthen. The first one was a research report titled *The Mountain People* (*18*) written by an English anthropologist, Colin Turnbull. It was first published in 1972 but I came to it late through the great and glorious boon for reading, the paperback. *The Mountain People* is a detailed account of the dehumanization of an African tribe in less than three generations. It is the terrifying story of a people appropriately called "The IK" whose only purpose in life is individual survival.

They steal from each other,
Snatch food out of the hands of the sick and dying.
One couple walled in their own five-year-old
And went away for the weekend while
she died of starvation.
Another family refused to allow their father
to die in their hut, for they would then have had
to provide a funeral.

This is a compelling and frightening book that made me realize how very fragile that which we call our human-ness really is.

Then I read Margaret Craven's moving short novel, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (*5*). Some of you may have seen the truncated version of it on television. It is the story of a young Anglican priest who has only three more years to live. His Bishop knowingly sends him to the Northwest Indian village of Kingcome to learn the meaning of life and death. At first the Indians treated him with respect but left him alone and Mark was desperately lonely and afraid. Slowly he was absorbed into the life of the village.

He played with the children
fished with the men
officiated at weddings and funerals
ached with them when their youth went off to the city
and suffered with them when
a mother of six died in childbirth.

Slowly he learned what his wise Bishop had sent him to the village to find: "Enough of the meaning of life to be ready to die." In their quiet perceptive way the Indians ask Mark to remain in the village until "The Owl calls his name" and death has to come.

Two very different books—one a research report, the other a novel—made me ponder the meaning of life, to consider the question of what makes us human. How would the anthropologist account for the difference between these two groups of people: one almost a subspecies of humanity, the other, a representation of all we respect in human beings—courage, dignity, and compassion?

I will never visit "Kingcome" on the Northwest Pacific Coast nor the mountain tribe of Africa. But my mind has been stretched, my heart educated by the experience of reading about them. No one can live long enough to see all of life clear and whole. But through wide reading, as well as living, we can acquire a perception of life and literature; and, on this fragile green world, a tiny globe of humanity must learn compassion and cooperation or cease to exist.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (*13*) said it best in the last verse of her long poem, "Renascence."

> The world stands out on either side
> No wider than the heart is wide;
> Above the world is stretched the sky—
> No higher than the soul is high.

Most of what children learn in school is concerned with *knowing*; literature is concerned with *feeling*. We cannot afford to educate the head without the heart. The parallel between the Mountain People who have abandoned their humanity and our own society's headlong rush towards destruction is frightening.

Now it would be naive of me if I suggested that *only* literature or that *all* literature is capable of educating the human heart. Certainly we know that the values of the home, the school, and peers, the influence of TV and mass media all have a profound effect on the ideas and feelings of children.

In fact that is one of the problems. How do we reach the hearts of this television generation who all their lives have been receiving such mixed messages about values that Coke has become the real thing,

> Ideal is a dog food
> Joy is a liquid soap

and they've been asked to believe in peanut butter!

The quiet times that you and I spent curled up with a book, today's children spend sprawled in front of a TV set. Statistics are frightening as we learn that most children average five hours a day of viewing time. In fact, Nancy Larrick (*11*) reports that a child of today will spend a total of *ten years* of his life, watching TV.

Books can't compete with that, but they can offer children options, give them freedom to choose how they will spend their time and with whom. The autonomous reader is never limited by the offerings of the TV channels. Once children have discovered delight in books, the knowledge of the world is theirs—free and as accessible as their nearest library.

Books can create feelings, and they can educate feelings even in the very youngest child. We have many stories which explore the theme of sibling rivalry, particularly children's reactions to the arrival of a new baby sister or brother. One of my favorites is Eloise Greenfield's *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl (8)*. Kevin asked his mother to bring him a little baby brother from the hospital but she came home instead with a baby sister. At first Kevin didn't like her at all. She cried too much and was all wrinkled. Besides that his mother and father looked at her like she was the only baby in the world. It just made Kevin sick the way they fussed over her and the presents everyone gave her. Then Kevin's mother told him that she used to be a baby girl and her big brother used to help take care of her. "Uncle Roy said, 'That's right, I wouldn't let nobody bother my little sister.'" Kevin looks at the baby with new respect and decides that she really isn't so ugly any more; in fact, she's even a little bit cute. He shows her off to his friends, "watching closely to see that they don't squeeze her too hard!"

The Russian poet Chukovsky, in his remarkable book titled *From Two to Five (4)*, tells us that the goal of the storyteller

> Consists of fostering in the child, at whatever cost, compassion and humanness—this miraculous ability of man to be disturbed by another being's misfortunes, to feel joy about another being's happiness, to experience another's fate as your own.

One book that will help children develop empathy for others is *The Bear's House* by Marilyn Sachs (*15*). This is the story of Fran Ellen who is ten-years-old and still sucks her thumb. The other girls in her class tease her telling her that she is dirty and smells. Fran Ellen retreats into her own fantasy world by doing her school work quickly so that she may play with the Bear's House, an old doll house that had belonged to her teacher when she was a little girl. The Bear's House becomes a real house in Fran Ellen's fantasies. Here Mamma Bear cooks and cleans and gives Fran Ellen a beautiful dress, while Papa Bear holds her on his lap and tells her that she is his good little girl. Fran Ellen's fantasy world contrasts sharply with her real world where her father has deserted the family and her mother is ill. Fran and her brother are trying to take care of their baby sister Flora in shifts and somehow hold the family together. This is honest, realistic fiction and Fran Ellen can't cope without adult assistance. Miss

Thompson, her teacher, discovers the family's plight and goes for help, but the reader never knows if the family are separated or not.

When you read this story to children and ask them how they think the problem is resolved, they always make up a happy ending for they want Fran Ellen to be able to stay with Flora and her brother. They have suffered enough *with* her to care *about* her.

One of the most popular books among the boys in a sixth grade class where I visit is *Hang Tough, Paul Mather (17)*, the story of a twelve-year-oid boy who was a top baseball player, but who is now dying of leukemia. A young compassionate doctor helps him play out his short season with dignity and tremendous courage.

James Baldwin (*2*) said:

> You think your pain and your heartache are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me the most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive.

Nothing connected David Ullman to the rest of his Jewish family for he was the lone survivor; the rest, including his twin brother, had been gassed or died in the German concentration camps. This grim story, *The Survivor* by James Forman (*6*), seems to speak of every known form of human cruelty. When David is finally freed, he has little strength and seemingly nothing left to live for. But then he finds the key to his future in a remarkable letter which his Grandfather had hidden behind a tile in their old home in Amsterdam. Knowing what any survivor of the family would have been through, the Grandfather's first words were of the goodness of life:

> Life is a wonderful gift. Like the tropic sun, it can strike you blind, but it is magnificent. Never despair....
> At the bottom of all human renunciations, buried under so many "no's," there is that last indestructible "yes," and it is sufficient to rebuild everything.

Whether for adults or for children, great literature illuminates living—the light may shine as readily from fantasy as from realistic fiction. In fact, fantasy has always allowed us to view ourselves from a unique and special perspective. Alan Arkin has written a wry and amusing tale, titled *The Lemming Condition* (*1*), which appeals to both adults and children. One day for no apparent reason there is much excitement on the plains where the lemmings live as the word is spread that it is time for "the great march." One young lemming is full of questions. He wants to know where they are going and why. He even has the audacity to ask if they can swim—an unheard of question

that somehow casts doubt on the whole race of lemmings! Finally, Bubber seeks the advice of an old lemming who has little to do with the rest of the herd. Their conversation is very funny indeed as the youngster reports that everyone is underground packing.

> "Packing?" says the old lemming, incredulous.
> "What do you take along for a mass suicide?"

When Bubber returns to the plains, the great march has begun. Caught up in the powerful surge of small bodies, our critical thinker is powerless to act. He does save himself in the last instant, however, by falling in a crevice between two rocks. After the madness is over, he walks over the silent barren plains and is startled to meet four young lemmings who are bemoaning the fact that they missed the whole show. They had stayed up to see it and then slept through the moment that made their species unique. They ask Bubber to join them, but he is beginning to understand how the mystique of the great lemming leap is passed on from one generation to the next and he wants none of it. Like the rats in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH (14)*, he is determined to change his basic behavior. Alan Arkin's unstated metaphor is that we too could change the course of our seemingly mad determination to eliminate ourselves in periodic wars of greater and greater magnitude. "The Lemming Condition" is obviously ours and we need more young, critical lemmings to question its sanity.

Literature for children is not just entertainment, although it may entertain. Literature for children is essential for their education. Edgar Dale says that good books may inform, great books transform.

Fine literature will create an awareness of living—a sensitivity to beauty that we have not observed before. In Mary Ellen Chase's well-known book, *A Goodly Fellowship (3)*, she describes a clear crisp night in Maine when her father awakened the entire family and took them out into the back yard to observe the brilliant Northern lights. After they had watched in awe for some ten minutes, he led them back into the house with only one brief comment, "Don't ever forget it."

Let's give children literature that will help them see more, be more, feel more. *Charlotte's Web (20)* can be read for many layers of meaning—a funny barnyard story; or an account of the meaning of friendship, its vicissitudes and loyalties; or as social commentary as to why Wilbur received the prize for Charlotte's work. I love the characters, the geese that speak in triplicate, the gloomy shee, Templeton, the rat who had to be bribed to be helpful and then wanted to take full credit, and Wilbur innocently eating his slop until told of his final destination. Yet my real joy in this book is White's marvelous

ability to recapture the sights, the sounds, and smells of rural living. You remember the passage near the end:

> Life in the barn was very good—night and day, winter and summer, spring and fall, dull days and bright days. It was the best place to be thought Wilbur, this warm delicious cellar, with the garrulous geese, the changing seasons, the heat of the sun, the passage of swallows, the nearness of rats, the sameness of sheep, the love of spiders, the smell of manure, and the glory of everything.

Let's give children books that affirm life, that capture the excitement of living, the joy of being alive—of being aware.

Literature and the Reading Program

Many reading teachers say to themselves, "Yes, of course, doesn't she know that is why we are spending time teaching reading, so children can *then* read?"

And that, I'd like to suggest, is part of the problem. We don't achieve literacy and then give children literature; we achieve literacy *through* literature.

A few weeks ago I visited an alternative school which prides itself upon its return to traditional education. Our visit started in the school's new library as the principal explained their program of more homework, more emphasis upon the three "Rs," and citizenship. Then we were free to visit the classrooms. I questioned the librarian aide (there was no trained librarian) on the operation of the library and who used it, when and how. I was told that the teachers scheduled their classes in it once a week in the afternoon and that after children had finished all their other work, they could use it in the morning provided they had a note from their teacher.

I visited three classrooms, staying some 45 minutes in each room. In every classroom the children were working on reading—the skills of reading, I was told. Their seat-work, and I use that old-fashioned term advisedly, consisted of individual ditto sheets containing lists of words that had to be matched with endings, and short paragraphs with questions requiring the student to complete the blanks. In groups of four, the children came to a table and read with the teacher from dull basic readers, answered her questions (all literal memory questions), and returned to their seats. I counted on a shelf about 45 old grubby children's literature books which no one was reading even if s/he had time. Before I visited each room, I returned to the library to see if it was being used—it never was. Obviously no one ever finished the task of learning how to read in order to have time to

enjoy reading. What a waste, what an unbelievable waste of the most important resource this country has—the minds of our children.

We wouldn't think of teaching our children to swim on dry land, but these children were being asked to learn to read from a desert of materials.

If we can believe what the psycholinguists are telling us, and I have every reason to believe it from my observation of child behavior, children learn to read for meaning and for pleasure from the very beginning.

Stories are one of the best ways into literacy at the earliest stages of a child's development. In fact, Barbara Hardy (*9*) suggests that all human beings' construct of reality is, in fact, a story that we tell ourselves about how the world works. She states that the narrative is the most common and effective form of ordering our world:

> We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative

Watch young children and see the stories that they are acting out in their lives. They are naughty and sent to their rooms and they immediately begin to tell themselves a story about how mean their parents are, how they will run away and make everyone sorry. This is the reason for the tremendous appeal of Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (*16*); it taps the very well-springs of all the stories children have told to themselves for years.

Teachers who know the power of these self-told stories will make them the content of children's beginning reading. After children have read their own stories, they will move to the folktales and modern tales that echo the dreams and wishes of the very young.

Children want to learn to read because they want to read stories (their own and other persons'), real stories where something happens to real persons—not nonstories of collective persons with a careful representation of each race and sex riding subways to go to something vaguely defined as work. One of our doctoral students who was studying children's concepts of reading asked a child what her book was about. She replied it wasn't about anything, it was her reading book.

Contrast that answer with my experience with Gareth, a large six-year-old child who was in a primary school in London. Gareth was teaching himself to read from the Frances stories he adored. He told me he could read two of them and that he was working on the third. I offered to read one to him if he would read one to me. He chose *Bread and Jam for Frances (10)* and, when he came to the part where Frances skips rope and sings her "jam song," he literally sang it. There was no

doubt in my mind that he was discovering delight in books in the process of learning to read. Joy was not delayed until *after* he had learned all 367 skills in comprehension—it was the natural reward of reading for meaning.

Increasingly psycholinguists are telling us that reading is a response to real, meaningful language. There has to be enough of it available for the reader to anticipate, expect, and predict for meaning to emerge. Of course you can learn to read biscuit, toast, sticky, or raspberry when it is part of a chant that goes

> Jam on biscuits, jam on toast
> Jam is the thing that I like most
> Jam is sticky, jam is sweet
> Jam is tasty, jam's a treat—
> Raspberry, strawberry, gooseberry, I'm very
> FOND OF JAM.

In order to achieve literacy through literature I would recommend that every teacher do three things.

First, read to your children, all children every single day. This will help them begin to see literature as a source of pleasure, something they will be able to continue *for the rest of their lives*. The daily story hour will provide the language of literature, the conventions of stories such as once upon a time, the three wishes, the three brothers, the climax, the ending of they lived happily ever after. This in turn will help children as they begin to read to predict the story structure, to anticipate the climax, and to imagine the ending. They will be building an understanding of how to cope with story language Children will also see an adult enjoying reading, something which may be a new experience for them. I have a friend who was reading Arnold Lobel's delightful story *Frog and Toad Are Friends (12)*; she got to the part where Toad is waiting for the mail and says "This is my sad time of day. It is the time when I wait for the mail to come and it always makes me unhappy—because I've never gotten a letter." Well, my friend burst out laughing and her six-year-old listener said "I didn't know grownups liked books." Children need to know that adults do like books and that they like to read them.

Second, I would provide time every single day for children to read books of their own choosing. We no longer can afford to say to children you may read a book when all your other work is done or you may read a book at home. In the first place, nothing is more important in the elementary school than to have a child reading a book and enjoying it. And, if children are watching TV five hours a day, then schools must provide time for children to read books for practice and pleasure. I am convinced that a child never becomes a reader from

reading short stories in a basic reader or from going through programed materials on the Eskimo. A child becomes a reader because he falls in love with a book, a book that tells a real story and carries significant meaning for him.

Third, I would plan time for children to share books—not requiring a deadly dull book report, but time to respond to books through discussion, through drama, movement, art, block construction, making a game from the story, any activity which takes the child more deeply into the experience of the book and makes it memorable. This is why I would have teachers read and know children's literature, so they could enter into a dialogue with children about their reading. Teachers who are enthusiastic about books will foster a kind of classroom culture where they talk with their children about favorite books, authors, and illustrators. One teacher told me of a child who had arrived late for school, forgotten his lunch, and didn't have his social studies project done. He looked up at her and said "You know I'm having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day," and they laughed together remembering the fun of Judith Viorst's story by that title (*19*).

One school that I know well received money for a remedial reading teacher. The teachers all decided that they didn't need a remedial teacher; they needed someone who could turn children on to reading, particularly those children who could read but who didn't. And then they followed the plan outlined above. All the teachers agreed to read to their children every day. In fact, the teacher of the eight, nine, and ten year old group makes it a point to share every day a picture book, a poem, and a chapter from a continued story with her children. The school has sustained silent reading every afternoon with the teachers reading children's books, frequently those recommended by their students. The reading motivator, as the remedial teacher was called, bought sets of four or five paperbacks of the same title for children to read together, to discuss, and interpret through games, drama, writing, etc. Parent aides helped children bind their own books which were then placed in the library for everyone to read. Parents also opened a paperback bookstore to encourage individual ownership of books. Rather than concentrating on the skills of reading, everyone concentrated on helping children discover the joys of reading. Their test scores went up higher than any other school's in the district, but the teachers and the parents were the most excited because their children were becoming readers. Instead of following the lemming rush to return to the basics, this school stopped and looked at children's purposes for reading. These teachers were not teaching for tests but for life. They knew the only true test of children's ability was whether they do indeed read. They knew too that children

would read when they found pleasure in reading. They discovered that the way to real literacy was through literature. For, through literature, children can begin to develop a sense of their humanness; they can develop new insights into the behavior of others and themselves. Literature can add a new dimension to life and create a new awareness, a greater sensitivity to people and surroundings. It can educate the heart as well as the head. We need to remember that:

> The world stands out on either side
> No wider than the heart is wide!

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A New Look at Children's Interests

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In 1964, a summary of research in children's literature was reported in *Children, Books, and Reading*, edited by Mildred Dawson. Included were six studies of children's interests made prior to World War II. These studies (*12*) showed that

1. Interests of children vary with age and grade level.
2. Few differences between interests of boys and girls are apparent before age nine.
3. Notable differences in the interests of boys and girls appear between ages ten and thirteen, notably at age twelve.
4. Girls read more than boys, but boys have a wider interest range and read a greater variety of material.
5. Adult fiction of a romantic type has an earlier interest for girls than for boys.
6. Boys like chiefly adventure and girls like fiction, but mystery stories appeal to both.
7. Boys seldom show a preference for a "girl's" book, but girls will read "boys'" books to a greater degree.

Between World War II and the early sixties, many studies of reading interests corroborated previous findings. The comprehensive study by Norvell in 1958 of more than 24,000 children in grades three to eight in New York State and studies by others with small groups, like those by Cappa and by Gunderson of young children and Droney et al., Jefferson, Young, and Vinton of older children, also were consistent with previous findings (*12*).

However, studies by McAulay in 1961 and 1962 noted a shifting down to younger ages of interests formerly held by older children. He

found that taped conversations of children "centered on current problems, that topics usually studied in social studies classes 'underestimate the interest and information children have received from television, radio, movies and travel,' and that interest can move from the community to the world scene in first grade as easily as sixth" (*12*).

Not long after, Zimet (*24*) reviewed several studies, pointing out the differences in the preferences of boys and girls. She noted Peller's assertion that at the core of every successful book is a universal daydream and that boys and girls can see themselves in their adult roles in the stories. However, it would be difficult to apply this explanation to all books, e.g. animals or science.

Cullinan reviewed nine studies of children's interests and tastes completed between 1967 and 1972 and drew the following conclusions:

> Boys and girls show distinctly different interest patterns in literature in the middle grades (Schulte, 1967; Feeley, 1972).
> Passages written in nonstandard dialect do not elicit as favorable a response toward the character as do passages written in standard English (Peterson, 1969).
> Informational selections have an appeal for primary grade children (*9*).
> Children's reading tastes have largely crystallized by fifth grade (*2*).
> Children prefer poetry that is relevant to their own lives [Terry, in progress] (*5*).

The fact that primary children preferred informational books was based upon a study by Ford and Koplyay (*9*). They attempted to obtain "precise estimates of the effect of motivation and the impact of cultural disadvantagement on story preferences." To do so, they gave 169 white upper middle-class children and 204 lower-economic black urban children in grades kindergarten through four a nonverbal picture test, including ten pictures in each of six categories. Children chose the one of four pictures on the page they would like to read. Second and third graders were also asked to choose a story from one of four sentences describing various plots. Most-liked categories for all children were, in order, black heritage, children in the ghetto, history and science, children in general, fantasy, and animals. Sex and age were considered primarily responsible for differences rather than race. The great popularity of the black heritage category was the result of choices by both races. While the white children might have chosen the category because of novelty, this would not explain the black choices, according to the researchers. They also state, "It would seem that the

impact of the technological changes of the last two decades, and especially the relative sophistication of information conveyed through television to very young children have altered their tastes." The shift here is away from animals and fantasy to history and science and represents a departure from results found in previous studies.

Early in the seventies, Brown and Krockover (*3*) twice replicated the Ford and Koplyay study. First in 1971 with 60 children in kindergarten through grade three, using the same procedures, they found that the categories in order of preference were animals, science, history, fantasy, children in general, and blacks. Their second study, in the spring of 1972, used summaries on book jackets from current children's literature with 53 children (31 girls and 22 boys) in the second and third grades. The results showed girls liked fantasy, mystery, animals, children and family, hobbies, and famous people. Boys preferred sports, history, science, adventure, mystery, and animals. These results were quite contrary to Ford and Koplyay but similar to results from other studies. Moreover, the Brown and Krockover studies show sex differentiation at a younger age, another evidence of the shifting down noted in the early sixties by McAulay.

Ashley's study (*2*) which led him to conclude that reading tastes are largely set by grade five was based on data from 900 elementary school children in grades four to seven. He found mystery was first in preference for both boys and girls, followed by adventure, ghost stories, comics, science fiction, horse stories, real animals, jokes, humor, and Nancy Drew. Boys preferred sports, Hardy Boys, war, riddles/puzzles, science, hobbies, and famous people. Many topics peaked out at grade five, and series books were not at the top. This was taken as an indication of honesty of response and interpreted as a natural stage in reading development.

To date, society in the seventies has seen a continued emphasis on minority groups, with women's liberation being taken more seriously than before. Recent studies of children's interests in reading do not yet show the influence of these societal changes. True, articles berating the "cop out" roles of girls in some stories have appeared, and lists of books approved as nonsexist by various groups have been disseminated; but in the midst of all this, the children remain children, and much that flows around them fails to faze them.

Studies of interest and comparisons of various groups continue, however. Zimet (*25*) secured a grant from the National Institute of Health and Human Development for a study in Colorado. She compared books preferred by 150 primarily black innercity first graders with similar data from 45 suburban first grade children obtained from a study by Wiberg and Trost (*23*). She found that the

innercity and suburban groups did not differ significantly in their choices. Thus the question raised by Wiberg and Trost of the relevance of first grade reading texts would apply similarly to both groups.

Roush (*19*) found that the 1,401 children she surveyed in urban, suburban, and rural communities in Ohio preferred mystery, comics, humor, and animals. Sixty percent liked poetry, with more urban children than suburban or rural indicating this. Urban children also liked more biography, family, and humorous stories than the total group; suburban children liked less mystery, family, and make-believe; and rural children liked more make-believe and mystery. Roush noted that grade level differences were more pronounced than location differences.

In 1972-1973, 100 fifth graders kept a record of books they read voluntarily and filled out a one-page questionnaire for each book read. One of the questions asked was whether they had read a book by the same author before. Eighty-one percent of the girls and 62 percent of the boys said they had, with three books the mean number read. Humorous fiction was the most popular type, with girls preferring Laura Ingalls Wilder and boys, Matt Christopher and Guernsey Van Riper. Both groups liked Roald Dahl, E.B. White, A.A. Milne, Helen Fuller Orton, Beverly Cleary, and George Selden. Small but positive correlations between reading known authors and scores on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (+.38) and *A Look at Literature* (+.25) were noted (*14*).

Using another dimension, Cooper and Smith (*4*) asked 595 sixth graders to rate, on a three-point scale, nine books remembered as favorites by elementary school teachers. Over half the girls rated *Pollyanna* first, *Black Beauty* second, *Heidi* third, and *Little Women* fourth; boys rated *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* first and *Black Beauty* second. *Red Riding Hood* and *Cinderella* were remembered the most by the teachers but not preferred by the sixth graders. The researchers concluded that remembered favorites are still read, but are not necessarily preferred over contemporary titles.

In 1973, a study of reading interests was undertaken by a student group in the School of Education at the University of Missouri at Kansas City as a requirement toward establishing a chapter of Pi Lambda Theta (a national honorary organization in education). A total of 811 questionnaires was obtained from readers aged seven through twelve who submitted the information voluntarily. The questionnaire asked children to name a book and its author, then answer, "I liked this book because...," "I did not like this book because...," and "I like to read about...." Results showed that

> ...animals were the most favored content by both boys and girls in all age groups, with a slight decrease at eleven- and twelve-year-old levels.

> Interest in mysteries grew from younger to the older age groups. Science, sports, and transportation were areas where boys expressed more interest than girls across all age levels. The areas of people and make-believe were favored consistently by girls more than boys (*15*:700).

Content was the most often mentioned factor of interest, with plot mentioned more often by girls than boys, as was character, except by the twelve-year-olds. Excitement, humor, and information were also cited as influential.

While it is difficult to combine results from the various studies of children's interests, a cursory analysis of some of the studies that have been made since 1965 seems to support previous findings (*5, 2, 8, 3, 7, 15*). Primary children like animals, home and family, make-believe and cowboys (*6, 17*). However, they also expressed interest in history and science informational materials.

At about age nine, interests of boys and girls begin to diverge, but they still have certain interests in common as well. Both boys and girls like mystery, animals, adventure, comics, and humor, though not always expressed in that order. In addition, boys like sports, science, cars and racing, history and historical fiction, and other informational subjects. Girls like fantasy and make-believe, people and problems, social themes, and hobbies.

Perhaps the most striking observation is that children's basic interests have changed so little in spite of the drastic changes around them. Their interests have remained fairly stable, though the trend toward shifting interests down to earlier stages, noted in the early sixties, has been apparent in the early seventies also.

Factors Affecting Interests

Factors that seem to affect the interest of children were identified in some of the studies, but the factors are not very different from those found in earlier reports.

1. *Sex*. Boys and girls differ in their reading interests, beginning about age nine or ten. This is younger than in previous studies, which noted age twelve as most common (*1, 9, 2, 13, 4, 7, 8, 3, 15, 25*).
2. *Age*. Interests are usually influenced by age (*9, 10, 19, 15, 11*), although Fairleigh, Evard, and McDaniel (*7*) found interests rather consistent over ages.
3. *Social class*. Conflicting evidence is shown regarding the effect of social class. Ford and Koplyay (*9*) found socioeconomic level less important, whereas Feeley (*8*) found social class of influence at lower levels.

4. *Race.* Race does not appear to be a determining factor in reading interests (*9, 8*).
5. *Location.* Location (innercity, suburban, rural) is not a determiner of differences in reading interests (*6, 19, 25*).
6. *Grade.* Children's interests peak at grade five and reading tastes are crystallized (*2*).
7. *Literary quality.* Aspects of literary quality, like plot and characterization, influence children's book preferences (*5, 16, 17, 15, 20*).
8. *Language.* Pupils react more favorably to characters who speak in standard English than to those who speak with a dialect (*17*).
9. *Authors.* Children tend to read books by known authors (*14*).
10. *Favorites.* Children still read favorite books remembered by elementary school teachers (*4*).
11. *Reading program.* The type of instructional program in reading influences children's interest in books (*3*).

Most of these conclusions are not news to those who are constantly working with children, yet recognizing their familiarity also lends credence to their validity.

Discussion

Studies which have been made over the years are difficult to compare and synthesize because such varied methods for collecting and analyzing the data have been used.

Some studies ask children to list books or stories they like best to read, but this is difficult for young children who lack the writing skills. Sometimes children are asked to check books liked from a list presented to them. At other times, children are interviewed, or they answer open-ended questionnaires regarding their likes and dislikes; they choose books they would like to read from lists of fictitious titles that are annotated; they keep diaries of free reading or fill out a questionnaire over books read voluntarily. Pupils rate pairs of books or select one from two or more pictures of types of books or book topics about which they might like to read.

Teachers list books children have liked and asked for repeatedly. Librarians keep records of books most often withdrawn and of children's comments about books. Other librarians evaluate the wear and tear on books in relation to their date of acquisition. There may be still other methods, but the difficulty of combining data acquired in such diverse ways is obvious.

Another difficulty in acquiring accurate data about interests is the availability of books. Children cannot prefer books they do not know, which is one reason why fictitious titles or annotations of

books, real or made-up, are given to pupils. In addition, samples or groups studied are not often comparable, and reading ability across age lines varies greatly, though Geeslin and Wilson's study (*10*) did take this into consideration when comparing accelerated eight-year-olds with retarded twelves. Recency also may influence the results when children remember a book just completed in preference to one read several months ago. Furthermore, checklists can be completed with little thought, and guessing may be the result. Children may give answers they think adults want and ignore their own surreptitious reading as unimportant. Keeping a diary can be tedious and, if book reports are expected, children may choose the easiest books in order to complete the task quickly. Children also may check out books they do not read or complete, and unless teachers have read the books, they cannot discuss them intelligently with the children.

There is urgent need for developing a method that can be used repeatedly and for replicating studies in various parts of the country, as well as anticipating comparative studies. Perhaps the time has come for a cooperative venture similar to the First Grade Studies in Reading of the late sixties.

Zimet and Camp (*25*) pointed out another limitation in their synthesis of studies on sex differences in interests. They noted that, while sex differences are apparent, these may actually be due to other causes, such as training or the social pressures of our culture in defining sex roles, rather than to innate sex differences.

In addition to studies reported in educational journals, several other studies of children's interests have been made during the past decade, primarily as unpublished doctoral dissertations available on microfilm. In 1976, IRA issued an annotated bibliography entitled *Research in Children's Literature*, prepared by Dianne L. Monson of the University of Washington and Bette J. Peltola of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, which reports studies completed or reported between 1960-1974. The booklet contains 177 annotated research studies; a bibliography of 107 journal articles reporting research; and a list of 48 related studies, such as books and monographs, Eric Documents, and bibliographies of research studies. Anyone contemplating research in literature for children will find this source indispensable.

Perhaps the studies of children's interests to date are all too superficial, and the real factors influencing interests have not been identified nor have the uniquely individual aspects been recognized.

My theory, which has yet to be proved, is that interest is a peculiar combination of factors, operating together as a gestalt. Basic is developmental level or stage, usually identified as age, for pupils are

interested in themselves and in the different skills they can acquire as their legs and arms lengthen and as they grow toward maturity.

The second component in my gestalt is information—enough information to formulate intelligent questions that need answering or to indicate the possibility that more can be learned on a given subject. This may be one reason why so many children stick to subjects they know—they have the base from which to depart—or why some children prefer to read books by authors they already have read.

The third component is curiosity—curiosity to expand information already acquired and from that springboard to launch into additional material and related aspects so that reading becomes a kind of "chaining"—one book leads to another and another and another.

Conclusion

Teachers can do little about age and physical development, but they can present children with information about a variety of topics that will whet their appetite and stimulate their curiosity.

Teachers who already know the interests of children they teach and who locate the known interests of the pupils in their classes are doing only part of the job. Teachers need, in addition, to stimulate ideas and create new interests in topics children never knew existed. The word "education" literally means "to lead out"; teachers have the opportunity to lead pupils out from where they are and introduce them to the vast world available to them through books.

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Children's Literature: In Chaos, a Creative Weapon

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It was interesting for me to come across, in a book of excerpts from the notebooks of the American poet Theodore Roethke, an observation which I should like to share with you. "It is wise," he wrote, "to keep in touch with chaos." I doubt that any of us, at times, is not visited by what the dictionary calls "a state of utter confusion or disorder," and we should not be surprised if historians would one day characterize this particular time in history as one of chaos.

We know that when this chaos occurs, however, it does not do so in a vacuum; it is not just a matter of war or politics or religious upheaval, moral or ethical changes; the confusion seems to spill into all areas and, indeed, into the sanctum sanctorum of children's literature. One has only to be aware of the past ten years of this body of literature to realize that people concerned with children's reading and their books, united ten years ago for the most part as to standards for the books, are now caught up in polemics which rival any political platform.

It starts with the disagreement as to the value of the primary reader, Dick and Jane, versus Roberts and his use of Tennyson's "The Brook" and extends as far as attacks on the whole body of the Newbery and Caldecott and other awards. The increase in the number of awards would seem to be some measure of the various camps into which judges, teachers, librarians, parents, and children are putting their trust.

Adapted from *The Reading Teacher*, 27 (March 1974), 534-539.

What needs emphasis in Roethke's observation is that we pay strict attention to the verbal phrase he has chosen: KEEP IN TOUCH WITH.

This presupposes, of course, that disorder and confusion exist. There are, alas, many people living today (although sometimes I wonder if they are merely existing) who refuse to recognize chaos and who would have the world just as it was, in some permanent state of seeming perfection, who will always long for the good old days where everything sat prim and proper in its little niche. I am not sure what kind of Utopia this was, but I can imagine it was sometime around my own childhood. There were Hans Christian Andersen, Cinderella, Aesop, the Brothers Grimm and, although there were characters like Tom and Huck, who were naughty, and Toad, who was irascible, and Alice, who was inclined to argue, and stepsisters, who were self-centered and jealous, still and all their sins were not too wicked. They were, after all, merely human or humanized and to be forgiven.

Children respected their parents, strove for good grades, were taught right from wrong, enjoyed the saintliness of Shirley Temple, gobbled their Wheaties like Jack Armstrong, and ate their spinach like Popeye. Everybody, in fact, had the chance to go West and find Daddy Warbucks.

So it was probably some sort of idyllic world, apart from the crisis of the American economy. The worst that could happen to a child was a few nights of nightmares over the Lindbergh kidnapping or the sight of Disney's wicked stepmother in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." But Hauptman and stepmother got their come-uppance, and we went on running through the hose in the summer and sledding in winter, and our parents survived the Depression as somehow we will survive inflation today.

Would we, I must ask, want to go back? To recreate that bit of nostalgia which one can see very concisely today at Disneyland? To ride the two decker bus, the horse and buggy, the trolley? To live in small communities, apart from the world at large and cherish our provincialism? To ask as Robert Louis Stevenson, that Englishman who exemplified what childhood is all about, asked:

> Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
> Little Frosty Eskimo,
> Little Turk or Japanee,
> O! don't you wish that you were me?
> You have seen the scarlet trees
> And the lions over seas;
> You have eaten ostrich eggs,
> And turned the turtles off their legs.
> Such a life is very fine,
> But it's not so nice as mine;

You must often, as you trod,
Have wearied *not* to be abroad.
You have curious things to eat,
I am fed on proper meat;
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.
Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
  Little Frosty Eskimo,
  Little Turk or Japanee,
O! don't you wish that you were me?

Avoiding Chaos

Have we not, rather, happily gone beyond the rank chauvinism into a world where we recognize that the Indian, the Turk, and black man may have something to offer to us; that their "curious" meat may indeed oftentimes be far more to the point than our "proper" diet. Indeed, technology has made it possible for us to see their "scarlet trees."

Shall we turn time back, avoiding all that has happened to broaden the world, to dignify all men, to raise us up as more enlightened humans? True, this education has given rise to much disorder, much confusion, but would any of us, given the choice, write words which could read, "It is wise to *avoid* chaos."

Could any of us, who work with children, who live in this world today, honestly wish to turn our backs on the necessity for questions, for arguments through which we have to struggle to go yet another step forward?

We can, of course, do just that. There is such a vast body of literature available to us that we are perfectly free to cull out what we don't like. We can find plenty of books in which Mother Goose has been altered to suit the didacticism and principles of health faddists, religious fanatics, and their ilk.

We can help out poor Miss Muffet by changing the spider into something more palatable for the young, such as a sweet little pussy cat. We can eliminate frightening Bible stories from the Sunday School curriculum—Daniel in the Lion's Den and Jonah in the Whale. We can find any number of versions of Little Red Riding Hood where the wolf regurgitates Grandmother, thus sparing the child any fears.

No, Virginia, the Big Bad Wolf didn't eat up the two lazy pigs. He was only just pretending. It's alright to play and dance and sing all day and build flimsy houses and leave all the work to your brother. Nothing bad will ever happen to you; there will always be someone else around to use his wits and help you out. Life can be very simple, and anyone who tells you that another Hitler can rise up or that a bomb can destroy you is just making it up.

To choose this sort of watered down diet of books, instead of the real literature, is perhaps to avoid chaos, for the moment. But whom do we cheat but the child and, indeed, eventually ourselves. For many centuries we have had, close at hand, a body of literature which deals in the symbolisms of good and evil, a depersonalization of experience which has helped men of all ages to better understand and meet the hordes of problems which may affect their lives. Far more, it has given them optimism and hope that heroes slay ogres and princesses need not languish in towers forever.

But when we pass up the Pinocchio of Collidi, and choose instead Disney's version, where the conscience symbolized by the Talking Cricket becomes a joking song and dance man, we are simply accepting that morals and ethics are of little consequence. When we bring into our schools and libraries ersatz monsters who cringe with fear at the sight of a five year old, we are pretending that chaos and disorder are really subjects for humor; monsters, in whatever guise, are not important and don't matter. It is, of course, commendable to face our problems with a sense of self-humor, but is it not humor misplaced when the evils themselves become objects for scorn? Chaos is not really a matter for derision.

Avoiding the idea that disorder exists in the world of children's books is quite harmful. In its most primary form it puts into motion the process of watering down the folk and fairy tale, removing the necessary symbolism and thereby cheating our children of the right to know that there are matters of courage, of fortitude, of wit available to them to fight the evils which exist, sometimes with help from others and sometimes alone, or the evils which may come to pass.

Speaking of the Here and Now School of the '20s in this country, which held that fantasy and folktale should be abolished, Lewis Mumford tells us, "We did not kill the dragon—we only banished St. George." In its other aspects it goes so far as to censor the right of the author or artist; it pretends that things remain at status quo.

Safe Books

In between the two extremes lie the safe books. They take many forms, but one of their chief appeals is the sort of sentimental approach to the past; their text is one of the aphorisms and their illustrations depict children in bland pastels, quaintly dressed, children who are models of all virtues. There is nothing to criticize in these books except that they ignore the fact that anything current or new is going on; an occasional reviewer will attack them, crying for some identification with the city (usually New York) or objecting to the fact that in their niceties they ignore the real problems of life.

The other range of books is a raft of slim volumes of poetry—or verse. They extol the virtues of nature for the most part, of pleasant pastoral moments and oftentimes range worldwide for the back-to-simple-life sort of approach. They are always lavishly illustrated, making up for what they lack in content and careful, thoughtful editing. Again there is nothing wrong with them except that they do not give a broad picture of the world as it is today.

But neither do I feel, as some, that we should rewrite the observation, IT IS WISE TO EMBRACE CHAOS. It seems to me that lately many writers and publishers have jumped on a wagon which is headed for a fiery hell of anything goes. Books written and published under this aegis take a special delight in picturing the shabbiest, most downtrodden, anti-moral, anti-ethical looks at our society possible. It is as though all values of the past have been thrown overboard; nothing seems worth saving. Any sort of language, and/or diction, is permissible—any sort of morbid situation or scene to elicit the great shock value is emphasized.

More frightening than anything is the tendency of writers to get their licks in at the establishment, to try to prove that all adults and their values are worthless. They side with the few members of the young in our society who feel that nothing is valid and, least of all, anything expounded by anyone over the age of twenty. This is not actually said in so many words but its message is felt, not alone in the conversations of the young (which may be accurate journalism) but more seriously intoned by the writer who seems unable to find any redeeming feature in any adult. The same sort of thing is also happening in some of the writing by children which publishers push at us in glee; the city is terrible, people are awful, there is nothing to redeem the world.

The Right Book

Somewhere in between these two positions, the avoidance of disorder and the embracing and fostering of confusion, is the best position: IT IS WISE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CHAOS.

This would enable us to offer literature to children in the most meaningful fashion. For if I have any dreams, any idyll of the world of children's literature, it would be that we cease to think of the "right" books for them. The rank commercialism of book clubs that offer "the books your child needs to get into college," any book club, in fact, that operates on the premise that no child can grow up properly, or learn to read properly, without a given set of books is a downright fraud. It is somewhat similar to the field of poetry, wherein a well-known educator supposes that one perfect poem will entice all children into loving and understanding poetry. In the current jargon, "there just

ain't no such animal." And I deplore methodology that tries to sell us on this very bitter pill.

It is my feeling that because each one of us is an individual, with his own sensitivities, his own background, his own outlook and experience in life and dream of tomorrow, he (or she) alone can determine in what book, what piece of literature, those qualities live which will be meaningful to the child, help him to grow, lead him on. The main point is to keep an open mind. Emerson called it self-reliance. It does not depend on some so-called book reviewer, some listing in a special catalog, the opinion of an expert.

Ten years ago I was perfectly willing and able to adhere to and recommend a given list of books *sine qua non;* today I find myself in a position where I strongly feel that a pragmatic approach is oftentimes better. Disorder, confusion, chaos are strange bedfellows.

The Child's Dream

Yet there are many touchstones: First, that we do not avoid chaos, pretending that it doesn't exist; second, that we attempt to meet it through literature (not just the kind of books which are poor substitutes); and third, that we find somewhere within ourselves that dream of what might be which will serve as a guide to our own evaluation. It is a corollary, of course, that we keep uppermost in our minds the child's dream. It also follows that the dream must be true; it must have some meaning in terms of the child's growth and future and the future of all mankind.

George Steiner, in his magnificent book *Language and Silence,* tells us that "It is a matter of seriousness and emotional risk, a recognition that the teaching of literature, if it can be done at all, is an extraordinarily complex and dangerous business, of knowing that one takes in hand the quick of another human being. To teach literature," he continues, "as if it were some kind of urbane trade, of professional routine, is to do worse than teach badly.... To teach it as if the critical text were more important, more profitable than the poem, as if the examination syllabus mattered more than the adventure of private discovery, of passionate digression, is worst of all."

Each time that I reread these words, I am again aroused by their truth and their importance. I would like to see them emblazoned on every library and school throughout the country and committed to memory by everyone who presents books to children—teachers, librarians, and parents.

For we do take in hand the "quick of another human being" when we introduce a child to a book. And any librarian or teacher or parent who does not understand this robs that child of his right to "private discovery" and "passionate digression," two of the most

precious possessions of any human being, and certainly two areas of growth, of dreaming, not to be found on the movie or television screen.

How often has the "private discovery" of a child, reading a story, a poem, been squelched by questions for a book report, an examination, a story read with interruptions to run to the dictionary and look up a word? What is the *right* answer and who is the voice *ex cathedra* who can interpret a piece of literature for everyman? Who has the right to interfere with "passionate digression," that wandering off from the main theme or plot or characters, to savour a passage, an idea, a few spellbinding words which we remember all of our lives, long after the author or date or title of the book may have been forgotten?

These acts can never be the same for any two people, and they are happenings which occur irrespective of the immediate response which may happen to cross the face of the reader. Everyone has discovered that in reading to children it is impossible to tell immediately what moment, what words, what insights have flashed across the mind or touched the emotions. In my own experience I remember not only children but adults who seemed not to be listening to the poems I read, yet will write to me months later or come up to me years later with the query, "What was the poem you read about pigs?" or "Where can I find a copy of *Macavity, the Mystery Cat?*"

Head or Heart

This is why testing, as practiced in most schools today, fails in the field of literature; indeed, it even loses thousands of children to literature, for it neglects to ask the essential questions: how does this book, this conversation, this passage help a particular child to look at life, what identification does the individual make with a character or situation, what special moments or words or visions plant themselves deep into the mind and heart of a boy or girl? There are no immediate answers to these questions.

We have been too long busy training the mind at the expense of the emotions. We have been concentrating so long on the comprehension—that is, the complete understanding of something, that we pass by the most important of early experiences, that of apprehension, the first grasping of the spirit of what is being given to us, as individuals in our own lives. "I have learned," says the philosopher in James Stephens' *The Crock of Gold*, "that what the heart knows today the head will understand tomorrow."

We must continually remember what it was to have the heart of a child. There are those who would have us believe that such advances have been made in technology and learning that somehow the child's heart has changed in the process. I question this. I know that today's

children are far more armed with facts, far more questioning than those who were children a decade or two ago. But does this change at all the essential hopes, fears, dreams of inexperienced human beings? In a confused world would not these dreams be intensified and the searching for identification with the world become even stronger, more important?

Archibald MacLeish told us, in the '50s, that the "crime of our civilization is that we do not feel." This message is outdated today. People everywhere are feeling keenly about their individuality, their dissatisfactions, their goals. Does it not follow that our children must be searching equally hard? Marshall McLuhan may rant and rave all he wants about the decline of the book, but no filmstrip, no TV show, no film that I know of can match the book for its ability to allow "private discovery" and "passionate digression." In these areas literature is unique.

IT IS WISE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CHAOS. It is wise to remember that when we teach literature, we are indeed taking an emotional risk. It is also wise to understand that we have in ourselves, in the books which we share, the power to make chaos, confusion, and disorder positive and creative weapons, for they can become, within the heart and the imagination of a single child, an answer to his dreams, and even, perhaps, to our own.

Youth Relates to Relevant Books

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Fiction for any age includes fantasy, adventure, romance, and realism. The first three are always acceptable for young people. Realism, however, is under the gun.

Yet, realism deals with the complexities young people face every day—poverty, prejudice, divorce, alcohol, mental illness, pollution, homosexuality—the gamut of the human condition. Realistic books face "under-the-rug" issues with candor but sometimes with resultant controversy.

There is a tendency to shield our young from all this scary stuff perhaps because we're ashamed or because we don't want to admit, even to ourselves, that our children know and are affected by it. But they do and they are. Kids know about death and drugs and dirty tricks.

Understandably, everyone wants to protect youngsters from pain and suffering from all the ills of the world. But is a blindfold the answer? I submit that it is not. The best protection is understanding, which comes from knowledge that children are not alone and others have suffered as they suffer, others have felt as they feel. There are viable, feasible, credible ways of dealing with themselves and with their world.

The value of relevant fiction for young people is that it deals honestly and courageously with issues that touch their lives—stories that say upfront, "This is how it is, right now, right here."

In sharing a story character's struggle, readers are less alone. In seeking solutions for the hero, readers may find answers for themselves. In watching the heroine wrestle with an emotion, readers may learn more about self-awareness.

The writing of such books is a challenge and a responsibility. I must admit that I have never consciously written a book for the

express purpose of helping anyone solve problems. I am a storyteller. My primary objective is to find a good story—one that I am eager to write—and to tell that story dramatically. My goal is to entertain, to share a story with my readers. Sometimes the so-called theme—the message, the "bibliotherapeutic value"—happens. If it does, it is a fringe benefit, just so much gravy. Readers have no trouble relating if the subject is compelling, the characters convincing, and the story interesting.

For me, it is essential to look upon the story's theme as one of importance, to the children and to me, or I would soon lose interest and so would the readers. I don't consider young persons' problems as cute, whether the circumstances are those of losing a baby tooth, going out on a first date, or being afraid of the dark. I write for the child I used to be and for the child I still am. To write from the point of view of a young person, I must *become* that young person; feel his pain, walk in his shoes, struggle with him.

I have three rules for writing relevant fiction:

1. Never write in a patronizing manner.
2. Never sell short the intelligence, awareness, and sensitivity of the reader.
3. Never, *never* preach.

What Children Say about Relevant Books

My book, *50,000 Names for Jeff*, deals with a little black boy's single-handed fight against discrimination in housing. Jeff handles this problem by taking a petition around as he has seen his bigoted opposition do, in attempting to keep Jeff's kind out of the neighborhood. After trying other methods, this way works for him. We are discussing the effects of books on children. Let me share excerpts from some letters I have received from young readers:

"Dear Ms. Snyder, That book in a way was true. That is the way we treat some black people. If Jeff had brought that petition to me I would have signed it too!"

"Dear Mrs. Snyder, I think your book is good. It gave me things to think about. We have studied prejudice this year. I think that is a good book for someone that is prejudicial."

"Dear Anne Snyder, My teacher read your book in class. Afterwards some of us kids got a petition for my teacher to read a half hour every day. 80 kids signed it, and it worked. Thank you again for the book."

"Dear Ms. Snyder. I was mad when the white people were mean to the black people. I felt sorry for Jeff when he copied the white people by getting a petition and only got two names on the petition at first.

The story reminded me of my class. Black and white children sit next to each other and they are friends. Our class sticks together. And in the end of your story, black and white people signed the petition because they were friends. The best part I liked was when all of those names came through the mail."

Relevant books can open the minds of young people to an understanding of other people, other problems, other styles of living. The story's characters and events can sometimes strengthen the reader's understanding of human motives and circumstances, of causes and effects.

Facts revealed within the framework of an absorbing story may dispel a child's misunderstandings and fears. If a reader can relate to a story character's problem, it is possible that he will make a more intelligent decision when he is faced with a similar crisis.

We all have uncertainties and responsibilities toward ourselves and others. We are all searching for our identities as individuals. Books can guide us toward maturity and compassion as we continue to grow. They can help us determine our sense of priorities, or even to change them.

When a youth relates to a relevant book, he can use it specifically as a tool for personal growth. These books can help the reader identify an illusive emotion, make a thoughtful decision. They can provide the reader with a way of mastering an act that he'd like to accomplish, a fact that he is gratified to know, or they can be instrumental in the triumph of a new encounter he has been dreading.

Most kids today are resilient, knowledgeable, and sophisticated. We patronize them and put them down if we avoid writing about the commonplace events of life and death. It demeans the young and their interests, their ability to understand and learn.

Librarians tell me that the most "worn" books are those which deal with the ills in our society. The fiction the kids want most is that which tells it like it is.

A young adult writes: "Dear Ms. Snyder, I just finished reading *My Name is Davy—I'm an Alcoholic*. I could never really identify with an alcoholic kid before I read your book. You captured the different type of kids realistically. I know kids just like those. I gave the book to my kid sister to read. I want her to know what she'll be up against when she gets to high school."

Another letter: "Dear Ms. Snyder, You told *my* story in *First Step*. My mother is an alcoholic in a state hospital. I didn't know about Alateen before. I thought you made it up. Then I found out it was for real, and now I go to Alateen and I'm getting help like I never got before."

In this letter, two youngsters collaborated: "Dear Mrs. Snyder, We really enjoyed your book and thought it was one of the truest books

we ever read. But we thought it ended too quickly and we were wondering what would happen afterwards. We would like you to write a sequel."

My response to these girls was a suggestion to try to write the sequel themselves . . . to work through the story problems and see what *they* could come up with.

Here's another letter: "Dear Ms. Snyder, I read *First Step*. I then recommended it to Laurie. She read it and gave it to Sally. Sally gave it to Billy, who then gave it to Carol, who then gave it to Jenny. Each of us agreed your book was great because it shows a *grownup* in trouble instead of a kid for a change."

The Case for Relevance

There is a great deal of discussion regarding the harm done to our children by allowing them to read realistic books. But while many adults steer their kids away from reading about "disagreeable subjects" and present them with "pretty stories," the kids, themselves, debunk the happy ending formula, the kind where all the loose ends are tied up at the end in the pretty blue ribbon; and they opt for the unresolved, credible stories that are told with openness.

I have never heard serious criticisms of unreal stories with "Hollywood endings," distortions of family life where the only conflict is whose turn it is to do the dishes. I think presenting a case for realistic books can go too far, but so can a case for the "happily ever after" school of writing. The real danger in these arguments is that a distorted picture can evolve in both cases.

Neither people nor life are all bad or all good. Millions of children know from their own experiences that the good guy doesn't always win, that good will not *always* prevail. Misinformation about life and people cannot help children deal with them better. Misinformed children often have feelings of disillusionment, confusion, or despair. When children read of the "perfect" hero or family, they can come away wondering "what's wrong with me?" At best, they may come away feeling cheated.

We all carp about the system, how individuals are entrapped in today's society. Contemporary books dealing with serious subjects allow children to look at the basic ills of our time. Most kids already know all about them. What they want to find out is *why* and *what* they can do. The kids need the support and approval of grownups to help them find out about the world they live in and what they can do on an individual basis to change the faults in the system. There is nothing so frustrating as the feeling of helplessness or powerlessness. Can our society be harmed if children learn early to face facts squarely and deal with them in creative ways?

The heartening and refreshing thing about kids is that they still really *believe* they can change the world. In my own teaching experience, I have asked children to give me themes for stories about which they felt strongly. Most often, the topics chosen were shyness, rejection, pain, and war. None of these themes would be found on some adult lists of "suitable topics for children."

When I am asked by a parent, "What should my child read?" I always answer, "Whatever he wants." It is my own personal belief that young people should be allowed and *encouraged* to read books of all kinds: adventure, science fiction, fantasy, even comic books. When I was a kid, I read whatever was available to me. That ranged anywhere from the classics to the confession magazines. I don't think I grew up depraved. I believe some of my feelings of aggression, hostility, and other negative emotions were discharged by living them out through story characters and events.

Young people are not so frightened of reality as some adults think. For the most part they accept it. They are ready and eager to be challenged. They are more frightened by whispered half-truths.

Personal, moral, and spiritual values are difficult to determine for ourselves and even harder to reach. But we know that children and adults, alike, are influenced by almost everything and everyone in their lives. Books that confirm the truth fill a number of needs; not the least in importance is the need to enjoy a good story just for the fun of it. If that's all a young person gets out of a book, that's enough. But just as art therapy and other therapy can help reveal a child to himself, so reading books can point the way to developing his own personhood.

Even those kids whom I call "lappers" are not too young to begin exploring their own feelings and values. (A lapper is a child who sits in an adult's lap while being told a story.) In my new picture book, *The Old Man and the Mule*, the two characters constantly tease and torment each other. That they wind up together forever in a push/pull, love/hate relationship is funny, but the point is made. The youngest lapper may simply laugh, but another may learn the value of cooperation and the importance of good relationships as he or she enjoys a humorous little folktale.

Books of comedy, satire, farce, and slapstick have long been favorites of youngsters. Books that create laughter are therapeutic, too. What is healthier than a good bellylaugh? Literature that teaches a child to laugh at himself and at the absurdities of our lives is as important as any. There is good reason why Dr. Seuss and Charlie Brown are household words. We need more of this kind of humor. Really funny books are rare, the kind that laugh with the child, not *at* him. We need more contemporary comedy, books which view our

world in a cockeyed or amusing way. And they don't necessarily need to be couched in bunny rabbits or squirrels.

As a writer, I like to skip around. I enjoy jumping from writing books for lappers to books for young adults. I like going from fiction to nonfiction, from educational material to TV screenplay, from fantasy to realism. I enjoy writing relevant fiction most. The gratifications and rewards are great. First, the child is familiar with the subject or at least has heard about it. Second, there is an immediacy in realistic fiction which hooks the reader at once. Third, allowing for good taste and sound judgement, there are endless topics from which to choose.

At a writer's conference recently, I heard a prominent book reviewer state that some writers are exploiting real-life situations as subjects for books for the purpose of "getting on the bandwagon and going along with a trend." But if realism were only a trend, Charles Dickens himself would have been hard put to find subjects and characters for his books.

Through all media, young people are exploring human conditions as they never have before. Their curiosity, intelligence, and sensitivity demand our respect and response.

Compared to children of the Victorian age, young people today have taken a great deal of personal freedom. There are not so many rights or wrongs, do's and don'ts. Issues are not so much black or white as they are gray. A good, relevant book for young readers today must reflect the new freedoms and the new responsibilities of youth.

I hear and read much about the value of adults sitting with their children to watch television and discussing the program they view together. I rarely hear adults, other than teachers, being urged to read the same books their children are reading. What an opportunity for open-question discussion. What better way to expose young readers' reactions to the book—their anxieties, hopes, beliefs, and joys.

A writer, too, has more freedom and responsibility than ever before. As a writer, I must ask myself, "Is the theme of my story interesting to a young person? Is the story presented in a way which can be a valid or meaningful experience for the reader? What solutions or options does the story make available?"

Finally, and most important to me, "Does the book reflect *hope* for the young reader, in spite of the mind-boggling conditions of the realistic world?"

Fanciful Literature: Some Considerations

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In C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (*13*), Lucy enters the land of Narnia through the wardrobe. When she returns from that world, Susan, Peter, and especially Edmund question that she has been anywhere except inside the wardrobe. After Lucy's second visit to that other world, Peter and Susan seek the assistance of the Old Professor. He suggests, much to their amazement, that Lucy may be telling the truth.

> "But do you really mean, Sir," said Peter, "that there could be other worlds—all over the place, just round the corner—like that?"
>
> "Nothing is more probable," said the Professor, taking off his spectacles and beginning to polish them, while he muttered to himself, "I wonder what they *do* teach them at these schools" (pp. 46-47).

Lewis's concern for the lack of imagination and the world of fantasy in the public school curriculum is not to be taken lightly. In his parting comments at the end of this fanciful novel, he reiterates his concern through the voice of the professor as he explains to the children how this other world is entered.

> "Eh? What's that? Yes, of course you'll get back to Narnia again some day. Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia. But don't go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don't try to get there at all. It'll happen when you're not looking for it. And don't talk too much about it even among yourselves. And don't mention it to anyone else unless you find that they've had adventures of the same sort themselves. What's that? How will you know? Oh, you'll *know* all right. Odd things, they say—even their looks—will let the secret out. Keep your eyes open. Bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools?" (p. 186).

I suspect that Lewis wishes us to consider seriously his repeated question. For the children in this story, the wardrobe was their entry

to the world of fantasy. Have we prepared all children to enter that wardrobe or have we, as the professor suggested, been remiss in our duties? Have we trapped our children in the here and now? Are too many of our children lacking the experiences necessary to consider the world and characters of the imagination?

When Lucy enters the wardrobe, she is like our successful creative reader, she is willing to believe in, trust and be patient with the ambiguity of Narnia.

But some of our students are like Edmund who is so easily misled by the White Witch. Some children have difficulty identifying the important cues in that reading experience. They seem to lack the schemata, that framework of prior experience necessary for the comprehension and enjoyment of the fanciful literature.

Defining Fanciful Literature

Fanciful literature is many things. It is the here and now examined from afar; it is a mixture of order and surprise; it is predictable reality with occasional unpredictable twists; it meets expectations with unanticipated turns; it is comprehensible reading with a few puzzles left unexplained; it uses common language with stretched meanings; and its episodic events expose the complexity of man. Fanciful literature is many things, but fantasy is mostly reality.

The Reality of Fantasy and Comprehension

If we take the position suggested by Alexander (2:2) "that fantasy and realism... both grow from the same creative impulse, the same fertile soil of imagination [then] what we can say about one essentially we can say about the other. The differences lie in the medium, not the message." At the heart of fantasy, reality is confirmed. Fantasy strives to add light to human values, to transmit them. Recognizing this, children cannot and should not put their reality to one side; actually, we want to encourage the children to bring all their knowledge to the fantasy. At the same time, the children need to know as Yep (*23*: 138) so clearly stated that "... our sense of reality is actually a social consensus about our world: We agreed not only upon what things to see but what things not to see." He tells us that "the error lies in treating our sense of reality as absolute rather than relative." It would seem that children need to approach fantasy as an activity involving the "creative adjustment of reality..." (*5*:759). Another way of saying that is fantasy expands reality and deals with not only what is but what could be or might have been.

To assist the reader to adjust reality within the structure of the fanciful work, the author provides the readers with the cues necessary

for easing into the new world without having the reader lose his sense of predictability. The competent author carefully grounds the fantasy in reality and in doing so maintains a sense of the here and now. As Lukens (*14*:108) indicated, it is that "persuasion that the writer wishes to bring about—persuasion that 'what if' is really 'it's true.'"

The Problem

Being a lover of fanciful literature, I have always been rather surprised when my university students have expressed negative reactions about being required to read a fanciful novel such as Alexander's *The High King* or Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. In some cases the students were not just negative, they were angry about having to participate in this reading experience. Although I had some personal difficulty empathizing with these college students, I did try to probe beyond their objections to determine why they did not enjoy this particular genre. Over the past seven years, I have received the following variety of responses:

> The story makes me uncomfortable.
> I don't understand what's happening in the story.
> I can't remember the names of the characters.

Because these adult reading difficulties may be indicative of similar problems and reactions children have in reading fantasy, it is necessary to explore some possible sources for the negative reactions. The ideas presented here are the result of many conversations held with my unhappy students—readings, reflections, and discussions held with colleagues in my attempt to understand why some readers are like Lucy, confident and trusting, and others are like Edmund, unsure and distrustful.

Let me first warn that much of what I have to share is based on the premise that reading works of fantasy, particularly high fantasy, demands more from the reader than most of the realistic fiction which is enjoyed by intermediate level school children, such as that by Beverly Cleary, Judy Blume, and Scott Corbett.

Fanciful Literature and Comprehension

Before we begin to explore the problems that may be associated with reading fanciful works, it might be useful to review what the reading process is. Goodman (*10*:265) defines reading as follows:

> Reading is an active process of constructing meaning from language represented by graphic symbols systematically arranged. . . . The entire

> process of reading can be best understood when consideration is given to the devices within language that convey meaning and the ways *readers interpret and react to these devices*

In Elkind's words, the reader constructs meaning from what he reads

> by relating these to the conceptual system he had constructed in the course of his development. The richness of meaning that he derives from his reading will depend both upon the quality of the material he is reading and upon the breadth and depth of his conceptual understanding (9:337).

In speaking to this richness of meaning, Elkind suggests that one's "satisfaction in reading is often derived, in part at least, from the degree of fit between the material being read and the conceptual level" of the reader.

If we may assume that these are accurate descriptions of how one reads, then we would need to consider what it is in the fanciful novels which would deter the reader from completing a novel or cause the reader to be frustrated by a work. Of course, as we explore these qualities, we must keep in mind that these elements will not cause every reader the same degree of difficulty. The interaction between reading material and reader will be dependent to some extent on the personality and cognitive experiences the child has already had with fantasy as well as the child's overall background.

The Setting

Let's first look at that backdrop to the fanciful work, the setting. Because the setting is often an invention of the author and may be very unlike our world, it may require that the author elaborate on this unique, special vision. Depending upon the break with our real world setting, the reader may have to be patient with the author's careful description. For example, in *Charlotte's Web (22)*, the barnyard and the fairground are within the background experience of most readers, but this is not true of the land of Green-Sky in Snyder's *Until the Celebration (20)*. In reading this particular story, I found myself struggling to create a mental image of the setting. In this story, gigantic trees housed the above-ground characters. These trees were so large that travel was along glide paths and branch paths. Maybe as I share this with you, you have an image of a solid walkway. For about one-half of this book, I even envisioned the glide paths as being some type of moving walk. My misconception of this aspect of the setting resulted in confusion. Knowing I was reading the last in the series, I recognized that I had to expect these kinds of ambiguities which might have been clearer in the earlier works. Actually, the glide path

is an open space between the branches of the trees that allows one to glide between trees and at different levels, using a gauze-like fabric attached to the arms and ankles to catch air and help control the flight.

Another type of problem found with the setting may be the necessity to create a mental map of a new country or land. Again, the reader must assume some responsibility in creating the image of this world, in order to keep track of the action. Tolkien's, Alexander's, and even Lewis's works are examples of novels that require new settings. Most authors aid the reader in this problem by including setting elements that are common to the reader's experience, like trees, rivers, mountains, and valleys. More recently, authors have also included maps. On occasion, the setting may assume a living-being quality in which one finds the setting almost consciously taking part in the struggles of the characters, such as in Alexander's *The High King (4)*. Children are probably more comfortable with things and animals assuming human or special powers than personification of the setting which may be unexpected enough to cause confusion.

The History of the Fanciful Characters

Not only must the children deal with a different geography but also a history of a people that does not exist. In order to give the reader the sense of a story that contains more than what is actually presented, the author may appear to give the reader a sampling of adventures in a tip of the iceberg fashion. The use of references to characters and events of the past may be another source of confusion while adding to the cognitive load necessary to organize many names and events. One of the major complaints of my college students was concerned with the problem of keeping track of too many characters. One likened this to the problem of reading a Russian novel. A few said they had to write down characters' names and their roles in the story to keep track of it all. These students are aware of strategies that can help them, but I suspect the Edmund readers in our schools would give up. Since the history is often included as an explanation of what is occurring in the present, it would seem important that children be able to grasp the sense of the past, but they may need our help in developing strategies to cope with the information.

Sometimes, the historical background necessary for filling in the gaps must come from the reader with the author only giving minimal explanation. This is particularly true in Cooper's *The Grey King (6)*, where knowledge about the Arthurian legends provides meaningful perspective to the story.

As the author attempts to provide the reader with the necessary data, the author walks a fine line between too little or too much

description and moving too fast or too slow. If the story is paced too fast, the author's inventions become suspect; if the pace is too slow, the reader may become bored.

Language and Style

Language and style can be another element which causes the reader to disengage. Literature uses a specialized form of language with its own set of rules and contingencies. Poetic license makes it possible for the writer to reverse some key language priorities for the sake of meter, rhyme, or mood. The inclusion of an archaic language, unusual structure, and the allegorical nature of the plots may cause the work to be less predictable. Related to this is the fact that many of our fine fanciful works are the products of British authors. Not all American children may be able to deal with the subtle differences in word meaning, humor, and the somewhat more complex sentence structures of British English which often include many subordinate clauses and parenthetical statements. *The Rescuers* by Sharp (*18*: 73-74) is an example of such a work.

> The entrance passage, which ran directly at right angles from the wainscot, was quite two and a half inches long, and this was their lobby, where were kept Bernard's cudgel, Nil's sea boots and cutlass, and Miss Bianca's valise. (It was essential to be tidy; and they had the Head Jailer's awful example.) Beyond, between the wainscot and the original granite, and from the stove to the outer wall, stretched a quite commodious apartment.

Hunter's works (*12*) present the reader with similar problems in making successful predictions. The use of the vernacular in style and specific terms may cause confusion.

> "Och, he'll come back again," Torquil consoled her. "He'll not be missing his blither with you over Alisdair's foolishness" (p. 33).
>
> He stood looking at the lock for a minute and then he walked over the burn (p. 76).

To keep things in perspective, an occasional problem like the above probably would not cause enough frustration that the reader would disengage. It is only in those works where there are repeated problems with style and language that frustration increases to the point where the reader does disengage.

Ambiguity and the Unanswered Questions

The last problem I would like to explore is that of ambiguity. The beauty or joy of fantasy is its ambiguity. It affords the reader the

opportunity to mull over and puzzle out the meaning of events. Not all is explained. We might take two recent films, *Star Wars* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, as examples. *Star Wars* leaves little question in the mind of the viewer as to what happened, why it happened, and how this relates to man and his place in the universe. This is very unlike *2001* in which the movie may be seen several times and there are still elements to puzzle over. One of the pleasures for me of reading fantasy are those opportunities to explore philosophical conflicts. For the child, who has had little experience with divergent creative thinking, the need to cope with continuing ambiguity may be burdensome.

Enhancing the Reading of Fanciful Literature

These special qualities of fanciful literature which bring pleasure to some readers may cause other readers to experience comprehension difficulties and this may lead to a general rejection of the genre, fantasy.

I believe that we as teachers need to anticipate these possible difficulties by providing a classroom atmosphere conducive to fantasy reading, by nuturing the child's creative abilities, by providing experiences which will broaden the child's familiarity with fanciful books, and by improving the child's reading strategies.

Creative Classroom Atmosphere

Fantasy reading not only nurtures the imagination and creative nature of children, but it also demands that the children apply their own imagination in the reading process. The classroom atmosphere can enhance or inhibit that creative process. I would suggest that three general conditions need to be maintained if children are to be encouraged to be imaginative.

1. Create a classroom environment that is varied and generally fascinating.
2. Plan tasks that are unusual, entertaining, and thought-provoking. These activities should encourage involvement.
3. Develop a classroom climate of feedback in which the children experience security, satisfaction, and recognition.

Nurturing Children's Creative Abilities

By fostering children's creative thinking and abilities we can also strengthen the ability of the child to respond to the creative reading demands of fantasy. Activities that benefit and encourage creativity in children in such areas as sensitivity to problems, fluency

of ideas, fluency of associations, flexibility, originality, redefinition, elaboration, sensory awareness, divergent thinking, independence in thinking and judgment, and imaginative activities have been compiled and tested in classrooms by a group of teachers and school administrators in Northwest Arkansas. The resulting booklet, *Classroom Activities to Develop Creativity*, edited by Robert Cornish (7), is available through Eric. Two of the activities which encourage children to consider unusual story elements similar to those found in fantasy works are:

1. Take the two words *just suppose* and toy with the idea that these two words bring. *Just suppose* a chemical permeated the atmosphere touching your skin on the way home from school. By morning you discovered that you were invisible.
2. Make up a story about a DOG-LIKE-OWLY-CAT. Ask the boys and girls to conceive an animal that never existed and construct or draw the make-believe animal. After this is completed, let the children name each animal. Encourage the children to write stories about their "made-up" animal (p. 25).

Activities which involve music, art, and dance, are also suggested:

1. Play different types of music or make different sounds and have the children move according to the way it makes them feel (p. 38).
2. Give the children an abstract picture and let them add as many lines as they can to make the picture their own (p. 33).
3. Let the children clap, skip, walk, stomp, and run to many types of rhythms (p. 21).

Make-believe play and drama also develop creative abilities. Singer (*19*: 242) suggests the following activities for young children:

1. Have the children imagine little sounds and sights such as the wind blowing through the trees or a flower growing.
2. Encourage the children to imitate different animals or voices.
3. Give the children simple props and show how these can be used for more elaborate series of movements such as the flight of an airplane.

These activities for young children may be followed with group storytelling where each child helps to create the story or a directed fantasy. In the directed fantasy, the teacher initiates the fantasy tale and invites the children to help weave the story. Background music can be used to set the mood. When the story has reached a natural conclusion, the children should be encouraged to extend the experience by illustrating the fantasy and, if interested, writing about the story.

These fantasy activities could lead naturally into an introduction of the new game, *Dungeons and Dragons* (T.S.R. Hobbies, Box

756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 52147). This popular game requires the participants to become characters in the fantasy and help to create the story. It is an excellent introduction or follow up to high fantasies, such as *The Hobbit, The High King,* or *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.*

Broadening Children's Familiarity with Fanciful Works

Increasing children's familiarity with the genre of fantasy and introducing children to the structural elements found in these works are best accomplished by regularly reading aloud a variety of books to the children. In the early grades, these readings should include the many favorite traditional tales such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Princess and the Pea, The Shoemaker and the Elves,* and many, many others. We cannot assume children will be introduced to these tales. We must assume that responsibility, for embodied in these tales are the same structural elements found in modern fantasy. Besides the folktales, you might include creation tales, how and why tales, legends, as well as modern fanciful literature such as Elkin's *Why the Sun Was Late (8),* Aardema's *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears (1),* and Horwitz's *The Strange Story of the Frog Who Became a Prince (11).* When reading aloud, organize selections so that the children are introduced to several stories of a particular type. After reading each story, talk with the children about what has happened in the story. This gives the children practice in visualizing the story and familiarizes them with the content and cues found in works of fantasy. After children have had an opportunity to become familiar with a particular type of story structure, stop the reading at key points and have the children predict the outcomes or what they think the next event might be.

The same type of activity may be used in the middle grades but the readings should also include myths and the more complex legends and tales such as those found in McLean and Wiseman's *Adventures of the Greek Heroes (15).* At this time, the children should also be introduced to high fantasy such as Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe (13)* and Alexander's *The Book of Three (3).* Many of the high fantasy books are written in a series or have sequels and could be as appealing as the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys books if the children are introduced to the first in the collection.

Relevancy Increases Comprehension

By increasing the relevancy of the fanciful work to the child's experiences, we can increase the chances of a successful reading experience. Using a questioning process, build associations between

the children's life experiences and previous reading backgrounds to the new story. Remember that the personal problems faced by fantasy characters are often universal problems. For example, Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web* copes with the death of a friend, Taran in *Book of Three* struggles with being a nobody, and Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* turns to his own fantasy world when he experiences parental rejection. When you encourage associative thinking, you may find that the children offer examples that initially appear irrelevant. When the child is encouraged to explain more fully, you will find the association is often there. We need to suspend our judgment of the child's response and model a posture of open-mindedness. This same behavior is also necessary when reading a fantasy.

When appropriate while reading aloud, the teacher might lead the children to deal with ambiguities and the new setting. The class could, as the story progresses, create or obtain a map of the imaginary country, create a character key or a lineage chart, or create a calendar of important events or a time line. Encourage the children to consider how the author shifted the reader from the real world to the world of fantasy. Another question to consider is in what ways does the author continue to give a sense of credibility even though the story is a fantasy. When a section of the text seems ambiguous or philosophical, use a brainstorming technique with the children to explore the possible meaning of the text. It is important here for children to see that more than one point of view is acceptable. By working with the class in this manner, you are modeling reading strategies for coping independently with fantasy.

Language and Comprehension

The use of strange, mythical names, places, and archaic sentence syntax (more often employed by the author in high fantasy) may be initially threatening to some readers. Creating pronunciation charts for places and names and accompanying this with repeated opportunities to hear the less familiar sentence structure will help to lower the frustration caused by the author's use of language.

Extending and Internalizing Activities

Through selected follow-up activities, the children can reexperience the events and language of the story. These internalizing activities will provide additional background for future fantasy reading.

1. *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.* Bring into the classroom an old fashioned wardrobe, or create one from an old refrigerator box.

Books on antiques may be used for information. Discuss the role of the wardrobe in the story. Use the wardrobe to dramatize the story.

2. *The Borrowers*. Use common small items and create the setting of Pod's home. Using stick puppets, dramatize the story.

If we look at reading as comprehending and reacting, part of our teaching roles may be to increase opportunity for comprehension by developing a prereading framework of experience, activities, and discussion during the reading experience and activities to follow to further internalize understanding of the content and cues found in fantasy. The fantasy is a highly imaginative language experience and, like most language experiences, it needs language related to fantasy experiences. We need to take an active role in helping our children engage with fanciful literature.

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Reading as an Activity and Theme in Children's Books

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A captivating collection of photographs of people reading was published in book form in 1971. Through the medium of photography, *On Reading* by André Kertész (*12*) makes a visual statement about the impact of reading on the lives of people of all ages. From the cover picture of a ballet dancer engrossed in a book, to the very last picture of an elderly woman reading in bed, one theme predominates—reading is a universal dedication for adults and children alike.

As a reflection of the culture of our time, *On Reading* gives the impression that the world, generally, is a literate place where a good deal of time is spent creating and using reading materials.

A single book can hardly be thought to represent a given society, much less the many cultural variations of the world. However, this book comes at a time when there is concern in this country about the decline of the SAT scores and of national achievement test scores and when reports indicate that more than 4 percent of youths ages twelve to seventeen cannot read at a beginning fourth grade level (*3, 6, 12*). The Report of the Advisory Panel on Scholastic Aptitude Test Score Decline identified several factors which appear to have contributed to this unfortunate state. Among these are a reduced emphasis in the schools on instructional approaches which would lead to "steady growth in verbal and mathematical competence" and less attention to critical reading and careful writing (*1*). Television and other nonprint media are also identified as contributing factors, since they facilitate learning through viewing and listening and, for the most part, do not require reading.

Reports on the amount of time spent watching television lend further credibility to this point of view. Feeley's review of research (*4*)

indicates that school-age children spend between twenty to twenty-eight hours per week watching TV while, in after school hours, they spend only one-third to one-fourth of that time reading. On the whole, children entering high school will have used 22,000 hours for TV viewing by that time (*10*). Comstock, in a review of research on the effects of TV on children and adolescents, finds that children begin watching television three or four years before entering school and spend two or more hours per day in front of the set. He also points out that "accumulated" evidence suggests that children's beliefs and behaviors are affected by the content of television programs (*2*).

These statistics are evidence enough to convince us to give some thought to the nature of influences surrounding children in the formative years of their lives. For, despite the advances of modern technology, reading remains basic to survival in this society. Children without adequate reading skills are doomed to failure at some point in their schooling, and young adults find themselves excluded from job possibilities and confronted with difficulties each day of their lives if reading skills are inadequate.

Television is not alone, however, in its ability to mediate the formulation of attitudes and values in its audience. Books and print media, throughout history, have been a source of power and persuasion and must be considered in terms of how effectively they support a commitment to reading.

In much of the literature written for children through the nineteenth century, adults, aware of the power of the printed word, used this forum to teach moral, ethical, and religious values in an attempt to rear the child to proper adulthood (*5*). Modern day children's literature deals more realistically with the delights and concerns of childhood. Along with this more honest and realistic portrayal of life has come renewed attention to the potential of books for shaping the minds of readers. Extensive content analysis of children's books focuses on evaluation of the role models and on perspectives advanced in these books which deal with such topics as death, aging, race, sex, sex roles, handicaps, and nationalism (*5, 7, 8, 9, 11*). Critics of children's literature, concerned about the influences these books may have on young people, write with great conviction about the harm that may result from biased and/or stereotyped representations, pointing out that what appears in print has the potential for influencing and changing readers. In fact, in summarizing research on the effects of reading, Zimet (*13*) states that, "Through the conscious control and presentation of specific content, the attitudes and behavior of children and adults was modified in predicted directions, demonstrating, in effect, that '*we are what we read.*'"

Based on this awareness of the power of print, Kertesz's book, appearing at a time when some portion of our population exhibits less than adequate performance in reading, is a welcome contribution to the field of literature for children and adults. It not only provides, through pictorial presentations, impressive models with whom readers may identify; it also suggests that similar role models in children's books may exert a lasting influence on their likelihood of developing a life long commitment to reading as a source of pleasure and information. It is important then to determine whether young children, when they read their literature, are apt to encounter similar role models. That is, do the books for children include the act of reading as an event or activity in children's lives? And, more specifically, when children are reading books in these early, formative years, will they find that characters read and that reading is presented as a valued, important part of life?

These concerns and questions led to this inquiry into the realm of children's literature to determine if trade books published for the preschool and elementary grades present the act of reading as a major theme.

I asked students and colleagues if they knew of any books for preschool or elementary grade children where reading is an activity of the characters or is related to a main theme of the books. Usually my question was interpreted to mean that I was asking for books about the teaching of reading. I had to rephrase the question saying, "Can you think of any trade books where the characters read?" The answer usually was "Hmmmm, that's interesting. Off hand, no."

The books finally selected came from several sources—my own knowledge of the field, a library search, references from students and colleagues, and letters sent to approximately 100 publishers, asking for review copies of trade books written for preschool and elementary grade children where the main theme involved reading or where the characters in the books were in some way involved in reading.

Though at first it seemed that finding books would be difficult, actually, in a short time I had amassed a rather large number. The final selection for review was limited to trade books published for the preschool or elementary grades. Alphabet books, books designed as instructional material, or books focusing mainly on the art of writing were not included. The books selected fall into three broad catagories:

1. books where the main theme is related to reading,
2. books where characters read or where reading is related to the development of the main theme, and
3. books where reading is an incidental act.

The books constitute a sampling of those currently available to teachers and librarians where reading is shown as an integral part of

the book in some significant way—either as a main theme or as an experience which underscores the act of reading as fundamental to happiness and success.

Though the selections were limited to books appropriate for preschool and elementary grades, some clear differences between books for the very young children and those written for grades four through six make it useful to divide the analysis into two sections. At the preschool and primary grade levels, books containing references to reading are, by virtue of the audience for which they are intended, shorter, more apt to have illustrations, and more often focused on the act of reading as the main theme or purpose of the book. Several of them are written primarily to point out the importance of learning to read and to show the excitement and sense of achievement which accompanies the accomplishment of that task. Books written for the intermediate grades tend to be longer and contain more complicated plots or events. They include reading in relation to a specific need to advance the plot or as a behavior of a character.

With these differences in mind, analysis of books containing reading as a theme or activity are organized into two distinct groups: those written for the preschool and primary grades and those written for the intermediate grades. Within those classifications, books are grouped by common characteristics.

Preschool and Primary Grades

Common themes can be identified in books written for the preschool and primary grade levels which contain the act of reading. They focus on the task of learning to read, the excitement of unlocking the printed word, and the pride and sense of maturity that accompanies these first steps into the world of books. Some of those books also contain strong messages about the pleasures and delights associated with reading and learning to read and often add a touch of humor to keep young children absorbed in the story so they discover that the serious business of life can be undertaken with a smile.

Petunia, an entertaining and humorous book about a not-too-wise goose, written by Roger Duvoisin, underscores the importance of learning to *read* a book, not just *have* a book. Petunia finds a book in the barnyard and believes that ownership of the book begets her a fountain of knowledge, since everyone knows that wisdom comes from books. With the book tucked proudly under her arm, Petunia moves about the barnyard boastfully offering advice to all the animals—advice which manages to get everyone into trouble. A series of mishaps culminates in an explosion of a stick of dynamite which Petunia has mistakenly identified as candy, since her reading competence is limited to carrying a book. When the explosion blows

the book open, exposing the printed pages within, Petunia reaches that great moment of insight about the reading process when she says, "Now I understand. It was not enough to carry wisdom under my wing. I must put it in my mind and in my heart. And to do that I must learn to read."

The book makes a clear statement that acquisition of knowledge comes from reading and that the desire to help others, which is Petunia's true motivation, can best be achieved by dedicated study and mastery of the reading process.

Olaf Reads, by Lexau, tells of Olaf who has just begun to learn to read and so mistakes a litter sign for the letter box sign—a humorous error we are so familiar with when beginning readers confuse the vowels. But there is more confusion to come when Olaf, enthusiastic about reading, pulls the fire alarm because he has read the word *pull* and, good youngster that he is, does what it tells him to do. The policeman says to Olaf, "It is good to read. But you must think, too. Read and think." And so the story develops a special theme for beginning readers: Reading is more than a decoding process, it's a reading, thinking process. Finally, after several episodes of difficulty with misreading and misunderstanding a number of things, Olaf returns home from the library jubilantly telling his mother that now he can read to her.

In all of these books reading is viewed as an important act—one that leads to wisdom, independence, and the respect of others.

At the beginning or prereading level, a number of picture books focus on learning to read common everyday words. William Dugan's *The Sign Book: Signs, Signals, and Labels* contains full page illustrations which include large signs associated with an activity, so that the young reader can connect the words with the concepts they portray. The illustration of the zoo shows a young boy watching the caged lion and the three signs read LION; PLEASE DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS; KEEP OFF THE GRASS. Often the children in the pictures are shown reading the signs, so that the activity portrayed is reading. Geri Shobert's *Books Are Fun* shows adults, children, and even animals peering at books to find out how to do something. The bright, full-page illustrations are filled with smiling children learning how to do things by reading such books as cookbooks, telephone books, and dictionaries.

Books for beginning readers also stress the joy and importance of reading, presented in such a way as to motivate youngsters and hold out the promise of exciting things to come through reading. This theme is developed in Betty Ren Wright's *I Want to Read*. It begins with the question, "Do you know what's happened to us this year?" and goes on to answer with full-page color illustrations showing

children at the zoo, sorting mail, going to the store, and doing so many things because they can read. The rhyming text ends with:

> And one thing I'm certain is true true true,
> You're going to be glad when it happens to you.

A number of picture story books include reading activities as one section of a total book, or are interspersed with illustrations and events where reading is portrayed as a wonderful achievement and a delightful way to spend some part of each day.

Tiny Tiger Learns a Lot by J.P. Miller and Richard Scarry's *What Do People Do All Day* include characters reading in both the text and the illustrations. In fact, Tiny Tiger gets so tired learning his ABCs that he goes home to bed. In *Tell Me Mister Rogers*, Fred Rogers is shown on the front cover reading to a group of children. In this book, each page has a color photograph of children, sometimes shown sharing their time and experiences with adults. One full chapter is devoted to reading. The text on the last two pages of that chapter says

> Reading for yourself can bring back those happy feelings you had when you were little, when grown ups did the reading for you. Someday when you can read very well, you'll be able to give little children that kind of pleasure, too.

This delightful book brings to its readers, both adults and children, a sense of the wonder and beauty of life as only Fred Rogers can.

There is that special time in life when growing up means getting a library card. Several books written for primary grade children highlight that important stage of development when learning to write one's name brings that special reward of a library card.

Rosa-Too-Little, by Sue Felt, is a realistic story telling of Rosa's desire to get a library card despite her inability to write her name or to read anything but picture books. Finally, Rosa is old enough to start school, has learned to write her name, and gets her library card. In the final scene, Rosa walks home from the library, alone, proudly hugging her books which she has selected from the easy-to-read section of the library. This is a true success story—the long days of yearning and waiting for the time to come, the hours of practice writing her name, the final achievement of competence and ensuing independence. The book underscores the importance of reading and the psychological strength gained from achieving these beginning language and communication skills.

Anne Rockwell's picture story book, *I Like the Library*, gives a first person account of all the varied experiences a nonreader can enjoy at the library. These include "reading" picture books and

selecting special favorites that will be read aloud by parents at home. The book ends with mother reading aloud a story about a bad tiger and then helping the child-narrator, Tim, practice writing his name. That, of course, is so that he can finally get his own library card.

In *The Library*, by Dorothy Clewes, a very similar theme is developed. The main character is Ginny, age six, who can read but cannot yet write. With her brother's signature she is able to get a library card so that she can finally borrow the books she is so eager to read. An unfortunate dimension is the stereotyped portrayal of Ginny's older brothers, whose negative attitudes about reading and the library perpetuate the idea that adolescent males reject intellectual pursuits. Their final decision to make use of the library stems from a misfortune which does lead to awareness of the value of reading and an interest in the resources of the local library.

The appeal of a local library is highlighted in *A Quiet Place*, by Rose Blue, who tells of nine and one-half year old Matthew living in a crowded but loving foster home. He is teased by older boys for loving books but encouraged by many adults, including his older foster sister. The closing of a local library and his desire to find a quiet place to read in peace finally lead him to the warm green grass in the park and to a firm resolution that he will find another quiet place for reading when the cold weather comes. The child's sensitive nature and the affection and support of adults living in the complex, noisy, dirty city are beautifully portrayed in Tom Feelings' charcoal illustrations which, at the end, show Matthew stretched out in the grass, under a tree, with a half smile on his face as he reads a favorite book.

Several books for children in primary grades which do not develop a major theme about reading include it as an important dimension in the development of the plot of the book. These books show readers who view the act of reading in a positive way, benefiting from the experience. As models for young children, they are excellent and point out somewhat subtly that reading is a powerful influence in life and a critical tool to aid in coping with personal and family needs. Though the focus on reading is a minor element in these books, the significance of the reading act plays a major role in the progress of the plot.

In *Bad Boy, Good Boy*, Marie Hall Ets provides insight into the difficulties that plague a Spanish speaking family who have recently arrived from Mexico and are learning to adjust to life in the United States. The disruption of the family leads to Roberto's enrollment in a day care center, where he learns to read and write well enough to write to his mother, begging her to return home. It is the act of reading the child's letter that actually is instrumental in reuniting the family.

Throughout the book, Roberto is treated badly by his father, but when Roberto shows his reading and writing accomplishments, his father finally praises him and shows some real affection. The struggling, uneducated family, confronted with the difficulties of living in the United States, has a high regard for learning, and particularly for knowing how to read and write. They recognize this as an aspect of acculturation but, more importantly, as movement toward a better life through education.

Marietta Moskin, in *Waiting for Mama*, deals with the reuniting of a Russian immigrant family at the turn of the century. Reading the letters telling that mother is finally coming to join the rest of the family already in the United States is a main plot element. On her arrival, the father proudly tells his wife that their youngest child has learned to read—in English, of course. The pride in the child's reading accomplishment and in the acculturation is reflected in the mother's words when she says, "Now I don't have to be afraid because I can't speak the language. I have an American daughter."

Mexico is the locale for Harry Behn's book, *The Two Uncles of Pablo*, which also stresses the idea that the quality of life can be improved through education. Nine year old Pablo agrees to go to the city to learn to read so that he can read a letter his mother has just received, thereby bringing honor to his family. After a series of mishaps and adventures Pablo returns to the farm without ever having gone to school. Several characters introduced in the course of Pablo's few days in town encourage him to study and to go to school. The reader is left knowing that in the spring, when the family is better able to do without his help on the farm, Pablo will return to the city to learn to read and that, some day, they will know what is in the letter. What is most touching in the story is the child's conflict between his desire to leave home so that he can learn to read and his recognition that he is needed on the farm if his family is to survive. Throughout the story the educated and the uneducated people Pablo encounters emphasize the importance of learning to read and becoming educated.

All of these positives values, associated with the act of reading, are also reinforced in many of the biographies written for primary age children. Often the ultimate success of a famous person is linked with early experiences where the drive to learn and the desire to read provided a key to future achievement. In their biography of Abraham Lincoln, the d'Aulaires tell of Lincoln's intense desire to learn to read and of his stepmother's insistence that he have the time for it. In Ella Kaiser Carruth's biography of Mary McLeod Bethune, the title makes the point—*The Story of Mary McLeod Bethune: She Wanted to Read.* The account of her life highlights her determination to read and her contribution throughout her life to the education of others of her race,

underscoring reading as a component of future greatness and success. Many other biographies of renowned people provide excellent sources of inspiration for young children pointing out that reading played a major role in contributing to their ultimate achievement.

What overall impression about reading will children take away with them when they read these books? For the most part, the books present reading as a worthwhile, highly respected achievement for children, regardless of sex or grade level. They stress the pleasures to be derived from reading books, signs, informational material, letters, and other print forms. They also impart a sense of societal approval and acceptance attached to competence in reading and offer valuable role models with which young children can identify.

Intermediate Grades

Books for children in intermediate grades are grouped into four distinct categories: books set in earlier times and other cultures, books dealing with modern day realism, books where the important reading is done by animal characters, and biographies. Most of them do not have reading related activities or experiences as the total focus or main theme, but they do present reading as a critical aspect of the plot and/or characterization.

Several books set in earlier times deal with the social and political forces of that era. They show that the act of reading played a significant role in relation to the nature and quality of life in that period. The books help the reader place the act of reading in historical perspective, seeing it tied to issues of religion and attitudes about sex appropriate behaviors, the perpetuation of slavery, and upwardly striving social mobility. One such book, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, by Elizabeth George Speare, is set in 1687. It tells of Kit Taylor's journey from Barbados to the home of her aunt and uncle in Wethersfield, Connecticut, where her reading competence and preferences are viewed with suspicion. Ability to read in females is unusual enough; but when the main purpose is for pleasure rather than for religious training, it is seen as inappropriate behavior. As the plot unfolds, it is Kit's love of reading and the secret reading lessons she has given Prudence that save her from conviction as a witch. It is, of course, all her unusual ways that have led to the accusation. In the dramatic accounting of the witch pretrial, Prudence, who is said to have been bewitched by Kit, demonstrates her newly learned ability to read and to write her name. This leads to Kit's exoneration and to these words uttered by Prudence's father who, having heard Prudence actually read by herself, says with new authority in his voice

> All my life I've wished I could read. If I'd had a son, I'd of seen to it he learned his letters. Well, this is a new country over here, and who says it

> may not be just as needful for a woman to read as a man? Might give her summat to think about besides witches and foolishness. Any rate, I got someone now to read the Good Book to me of an evening, and if that's the work of the Devil, then I say 'tis a mighty queer thing for the devil to be working against himself!

What is reflected here is a societal value stressing that reading and religion are intertwined, that the purpose of reading is to pursue the religious life more rigorously, and that reading ability is something to look up to, even in a girl. It provides today's readers with insights into earlier cultures, highlighting the contrast between our present-day view of the purpose of reading and that of times past. Such books are useful for helping young readers develop a sense of history which includes a view of the reading act in historical perspective. Today's values about reading can be contrasted with those of an era when print materials were scarce, other media (TV in particular) were nonexistent, and when developing countries were just beginning to formulate cultural and political perspectives.

In Julius Lester's collection of short stories called *Long Journey Home, Stories from Black History*, the story of "Louis," set in pre-Civil War days, tells of that slave's escape to freedom and of his intense desire to learn to read. The story takes on a special relevance with the publication and TV portrayal of *Roots*, which documents the prevailing view of that time of literacy as a legacy for the exclusive use of a ruling class. People are more aware now than ever before that slaves were forbidden to learn to read and write and that the penalty for breaking that rule was brutal punishment or even death. The story "Louis" makes the point, as does *Roots*, that blacks did not learn because it was forbidden, not because they were constitutionally unable. What is most important in "Louis" and other stories dealing with American slavery is that they confront us with some obvious facts. Slaves did learn to read, often with a minimum of instruction. They had the desire to learn and many succeeded so well that they were able to teach others.

That very point is stated eloquently by Job in the book *Cowslip* by Betsy Haynes. Cowslip, a thirteen-year-old slave, has come to ask Job to write the master's name on a slip of paper so that she can place a curse on him. In the ensuing dialogue, the reader learns of the laws prohibiting slaves from learning to read and write. Cowslip has accepted the ruling as the will of the Lord. Job explains to Cowslip why the law has denied blacks the right to literacy by saying

> "Chains and whips can only enslave your body," Job began, "not your mind. And if your mind is free, you're going to want your body to be free, too. Master can't take a chance on that happening, because then you wouldn't work so hard, and you'd cause him all kinds of trouble. If you

could read, you'd find out what life is like far away from here, where it's held to be a sin for one man to own another, and you'd run away."

And a bit further along he adds

"Master takes every precaution to keep his slaves as mindless as a flock of chickens. To him they're animals, and they come to think of themselves as animals, too. Master never lets slaves think of themselves as human beings or allows them to have a will of their own, because when he tosses them a few specks of food and a rag or two to keep themselves warm, he wants them to be grateful. Then he brings a man to the plantation that he calls a preacher to tell the blacks that slavery is the will of the Lord."

Lester and Hayes both show that some slaves, during the years of their servitude, yearned for education and often risked their lives while learning to read.

Life for blacks after the Civil War is depicted in the well-known book, *Sounder* by William Armstrong, set in the rural south near the turn of the 19th century. The poverty of southern black life and the cruelty of an oppressive white society is contrasted with the determination of a young black child not only to find his father but also to learn to read. The mother, who has been left alone with younger children to care for, urges her son to go to live with his teacher and give up the search for his father. Despite the poverty and the tragedy that have befallen the family, the child's learning is most important. "One day I will learn to read," he says to himself at the very beginning of the book. And the boy's wish comes true. Books as friends and books as sources of knowledge are valued in this sensitive, touching saga of the poor black sharecropper family struggling for survival in the deep south.

Animal Characters

Several books with animals or birds as main characters involve reading as a major theme or as an event that advances the plot. In E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, it is the reading of Charlotte's spider web words that saves Wilber's life. And in his *The Trumpet of the Swan*, Louis learns to read and write, since he cannot make a sound. A number of books present, through animal behaviors, similar themes which connect reading with social and intellectual competence and with personal self-fulfillment.

Mary Anderson has assigned reading and writing ability to a New York pigeon, Emma, in her recent book, *Emma's Search for Something*. As a mother and wife, Emma becomes dissatisfied with her role and her limited knowledge and yearns for something more.

Initially, her reading ability leads her to some extreme behaviors as she struggles to broaden her geographic and "human" spheres. Finally, she accepts the limitations, traditional as they may be, of her role as wife and mother, performing the stereotyped duties of feeding the family and running the "home." But she does convince her family that they must improve themselves as "pigeon people" by learning to read. She gives them lessons and continues to study herself by looking over the shoulders of people reading in the library. In this amusing book, the knowledge gained through reading is essential to the plot. It provides the basis for the main character's growth as a "person," leading her to discover her own potential and to foster growth in other members of her family.

Perhaps one of the most timely books is Robert O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH.* In these days of controversy over experimentation with recombinant DNA, O'Brien suggests that animal experiments combining the use of DNA and steroids may create rats with intelligence equal to or surpassing that of humans and may also create an ageless species. Through experimentation, the rats of NIMH develop such a high level of intelligence that they are able to read not just the simple words taught to them by the experimenters—they can read and understand whole libraries of books and actually develop their own moral, complex civilization. Reading in this book is shown as a value in acquisition of basic facts needed for practical survival. More than that, the rats' study leads to a yearning for a society where they no longer must be dependent on stealing from others in order to survive. Through reading they have developed a desire to live moral, ethical lives. The theme of wishing to be more-than-one-is appears in this book as the animals seek, through reading and knowledge, to improve their lot in life. It is, of course, through the human code of written language that they are able to do this.

Modern Day Realism

Several books dealing with modern times and themes show characters involved in reading as a customary part of daily living. Ruth Hooker in *Gertrude Kloppenberg II* has the main character writing her own book, so that each chapter consists of a chapter of Gertrude's daily diary. Not only is Gertrude herself an avid reader, she also undertakes the role of remedial reading teacher for the young Murphy boy who is having reading problems in second grade. Her language experience approach to instruction is well worth emulating and is sure to entertain young readers. All of the adults, along with Gertrude, are portrayed as placing high value on ability to read. Gertrude herself, in her role as teacher, really hopes that Tom will

learn to read well. By the end of the book we know she has succeeded when Tom's mother remarks "Now that he's started reading we can't get him to stop."

Other books for intermediate grade children show reading as an accepted, valued act and one that naturally is included as part of daily living. *Sam* by Barbara Corcoran, tells of a fifteen-year-old Montana girl's life on an island and her difficulties as she attempts to become integrated into a high school peer group when she finally is allowed to attend public school. Throughout the book, reading is presented as something people naturally choose to do for a variety of different reasons—for information, for pleasure, as a leisure time activity, and as something adults and children customarily select as a daily activity. Sam's interest in show dogs is a focal point of the book. Much of her time and the time of other characters is spent looking up information about dogs and later about New York when Sam wins the chance to show her dog in the big city. Sam's early life on the island stems from her father's rejection of civilization and his determination to rear his children away from the disappointments of society. Although he has rejected people, he places great value on reading, education, and the importance of a focus and purpose in life.

In *The Egypt Game*, by Zilpha Snyder, a mystery unfolds as the children, April and Melanie, read about Egypt and create exciting adventures using information about ancient Egypt. Constant references to the children's interest in reading permeate the book showing reading as a source of pleasure and information, and particularly as a way of expanding their imaginations as the Egypt game evolves. An interesting touch is the idea the children get, after reading a book about hieroglyphics, that it would be fun to make up their own hieroglyphics. Throughout the book, the importance of reading is underscored as an advantage for children both academically and as a way of gaining exciting ideas and information to enhance play time activities.

Biography

A number of biographies and autobiographies point out that famous people, in some part, owe their success to their proficiency in reading. Outstanding in their emphasis on learning to read as a major life drive are books about Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan. In such books as *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller, *The Helen Keller Story* by Catherine Owens Peare, *The Silent Storm* by Marion Brown and Ruth Cone, *Helen Keller's Teacher* by Mickie Davidson, and *Annie Sullivan: A Portrait* by Terr Dunnahoo, the reader is struck with the intensity of the desire to learn to read and with the dedication to this achievement shown by both of these

remarkable women. Reading, for them, is presented as a lifeline—a way to make connections with other people and the world, with knowledge, and with life itself.

Similar development of reading as a life force is found in *Seeing Fingers: The Story of Louis Braille* by Etta DeGering, *Mary McLeod Bethune* by Catherine Owens Peare, *I'm Nobody, Who Are You: The Story of Emily Dickinson* by Edna Barth, and many others.

The lives of these and other famous people serve as inspirational models for all young people, who learn from reading their life stories that learning to read and reading are basic components of greatness.

Conclusion

These are only a few of the books where characters are shown reading for pleasure, for information, and for a road to success and achievement. For children they present models—examples of book character friends who show, through reading, that life is more manageable and satisfying. By using the books singly, or in a unit of study focusing on reading as a theme and activity, teachers can point out the significance of reading to illustrate that it has been and remains a highly respected and valued activity in our culture. As children identify with characters and draw increased understanding from the themes of these books, perhaps they will internalize the positive values and become more willing to select reading as the way of spending many pleasurable hours, both in and out of school. And perhaps the problems of declining test scores and functional illiteracy will be addressed, to some small degree at least, through the influence of these role models in children's books.

A Selected, Annotated Bibliography of Children's Books Containing Reading as a Theme or Activity

This list provides a few examples of books at the primary and intermediate grade levels that may be useful for development of a teaching unit which includes books where reading is a theme or activity. The annotations focus on how reading is incorporated into the book, rather than on a description of the general contents of the work.

Primary

Bach, Alice. *The Smartest Bear and His Brother Oliver*. Illustrated by Steven Kellog. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Ronald is determined to read the entire encyclopedia to establish himself as different from his twin brother, Oliver, whose major delight is eating. Ronald learns that he has been successful at this when Ma and Pa Bear present the children with very different birthday presents before the long period of hibernation sets in.

Behn, Harry. *The Two Uncles of Pablo*. Illustrated by Mel Silverman. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.
Pablo goes to the city to learn to read so that he can read to his family a letter his mother has received. His adventures in the city show the value of reading an education.

Black, Irma Simonton. *The Little Old Man Who Could Not Read*. Illustrated by Seymour Fleishman. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 1972.
The little old man who could not read has difficulty shopping for food in a supermarket and preparing edible meals when his literate wife takes a trip. Upon his wife's return, he asks her to teach him to read.

Blue, Rose. *A Quiet Place*. Illustrated by Tom Feelings. New York: Franklin Watts, 1969.
Matthew, a foster child, loves the library and the world of books. His disappointment when the local library closes and he is left without a quiet place to read is overcome when he finds a peaceful spot on the grass in the park.

Cohen, Miriam. *When Will I Read?* Illustrated by Lillian Hoban. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1977.
Jim, in the first grade, is reassured by his teacher that he will learn to read when he is ready. A chance situation leads to his awareness that he can, in fact, actually unlock the code.

Duvoisin, Roger. *Petunia*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1950.
Petunia learns the hard way that wisdom is gained from reading a book, not from carrying it under her wing.

Ets, Marie Hall. *Bad Boy, Good Boy*. New York: Crowell, 1967.
Reading a letter makes a difference to the entire family in this book. Roberto's reading and writing achievements win him the praise of his father and contribute to reuniting his family.

Felt, Sue. *Rosa-Too-Little*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1950.
Rosa finally learns to write her name and is able to get her library card. Going to the library to hear stories read aloud is one of Rosa's activities while she waits to grow up so that she can get her own library card to borrow books to read herself.

Foster, Genevieve. *Andrew Jackson*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
This biography of our former president tells of his public reading of the Declaration of Independence when he was only nine years old.

Graff, Stewart, and Polly Graff. *Helen Keller, Toward the Light*. Illustrated by Paul Frame. Champaign, Illinois: Garrard, 1965.
This biography of Helen Keller tells of her relationship with Annie Sullivan and of the impact of learning to read and spell, thereby unlocking a whole world of knowledge and of human relationships.

Hooker, Ruth. *Gertrude Kloppenberg II*. Illustrated by Gloria Kamen. New York: Abington, 1974.
Gertrude undertakes to tutor second grader Tom, who has not been doing very well with reading. Her language experience approach to instruction is well worth emulating and leads to ultimate success.

Keller, Helen. *The Story of My Life*, Magnum Easy-Eye Book. New York: Lancer Books, 1968.
Helen Keller tells of the importance of reading and the love of literature, making the reader aware of the impact of this skill in influencing the course of this great woman's life.

Kertész, André. *On Reading*. New York: Grossman, 1971.
This collection of photographs of people reading has appeal for all ages.

Lexau, Joan. *Olaf Reads*. Illustrated by Harvey Weiss. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1951.
Olaf, in his enthusiasm to read, makes a number of amusing errors. By the end of the book, he has become proficient in reading, offering to read to his mother instead of having her read to him.

McGovern, Ann. *Christopher Columbus*. Illustrated by Joe Lasker. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1962.
In this biography, readers learn that Columbus went to Lisbon so that he could learn to read and would be able to study. Columbus wanted to learn to make maps in order to convince the Queen that the world was round.

Meshover, Leonard. *You Visit a Newspaper Television Station*. Photographs by Eve Hoffman. Atlanta: Benefic Press, 1965.
Many photographs of children and adults reading illustrate this informative account of visits to a newspaper office and a television station. The photographs and text tell of the communication process through the press and through TV.

Rogers, Fred. *Tell Me Mister Rogers*. Sheldon Secunda, Photographer. New York: Platt and Munk, 1975.
Fred Rogers uses color photographs to develop specific themes in each chapter. One chapter is devoted to reading as an activity that children will enjoy throughout life.

Schobert, Geri. *Books Are Fun*. Illustrated by Jim Cummins. Racine, Wisconsin: Golden Press, Western Publishing Company, 1974.
A series of amusing but informative illustrations picturing children reading are combined with a brief text telling about the many things to be learned and enjoyed through reading.

Smith, Beatrice S. *From Peanuts to President*. Photographs by Charles M. Rafshoon. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Raintree Editions, 1977.
The life of President Carter is told with some emphasis on his love of reading and his interest in books about the Navy as early as first grade.

Udry, Janice May. *What Mary Jo Wanted*. Illustrated by Eleanor Mill. New York: Young Readers Press, 1968.
Mary Jo wanted a dog. This book shows Mary Jo reading the newspaper advertisement in the Pets for Sale Section to find a dog, looking for dog names in the dictionary, and reading books about the care of dogs.

Wright, Betty Ren. *I Want to Read*. Illustrated by Aliki. Racine, Wisconsin: Golden Press, Western Publishing, 1970.
Tells, in large full-color illustrations and in text, of the excitement of learning to read. Pictures show children reading many different things.

Intermediate

Anderson, Mary. *Emma's Search for Something*. Illustrated by Peter Parnall. New York: Atheneum, 1973.
Emma Pigeon has a precious gift—she can read. Initially she does not find reading very satisfying; but one day, reading over the shoulder of a woman in the library, Emma learns all about pigeons. This brings about a major change in her life.

Armstrong, William H. *Sounder*. Illustrated by James Barkley. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969.
Poverty and persecution do not prevent this young black child in his determination to learn to read. The story underscores the dedication to learning that characterizes a deprived black family beset by tragedy.

Gates, Doris. *Blue Willow*. Illustrated by Paul Lantz. New York: Viking Press, 1968.
Janey, the daughter of a migrant family, longs to attend school and to have a chance to read all kinds of books. As preparation (in the event that day comes), she practices reading using her only book, the Bible, and eagerly reads new books when she unexpectedly finds a library booth at the local fair.

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Part Three

USING POETRY

Poetry has often been the most neglected component of the language arts curriculum. Perhaps one of the reasons for this omission is that unless poetry is a vital factor in one's own life, we know little about it and thus feel uncomfortable in using it in the classroom. Pauline Peck answers the most commonly asked questions regarding the use of poetry with children and provides an annotated bibliography of poems for the primary and intermediate grades.

The second article in this section describes one school's experience with poetry. Sue Nugent Reed, an elementary school principal, relates one component of her school's career education program.

The concluding article addresses the challenge of using poetry effectively with adolescents. O'Brien and Schwarzberg provide a strategy for aiding the comprehension of and appreciation for this literary form.

Poetry: A Turn On to Reading

Pauline C. Peck
Xerox Education Publications

Poetry is communication. It is a speaking and listening experience. And poetry for children communicates with them in their natural language. But poems should be heard and not seen by very young children. They react to the tempo, cadence, and imagery of verses read aloud. If children do not respond emotionally and communicate their delight, then what they have heard isn't poetry.

Although poetry is not bound by the ribbons of rhyme, young children are *tuned in* and *turned on* by rhyme. They delight in Mother Goose, from Old Mother Hubbard and the bare cupboard to derelict Boy Blue who neglected to blow his horn.

Children jump rope to rhymes. Fuzzy Wuzzy Bear still has no "hair" (as sung by the jump rope set today), for to modernize him with a "rug," a transplant, or a weaving job would spoil the jingle.

And the wiggles and the giggles that abound when children inadvertently say something that rhymes—or better still, hear you speak in unexpected rhyme—make the poet reach for pencil and paper.

But pleased though we may be by rhyme, we must avoid the pitfalls of forced rhyme. Forced rhyme is a crime. When rhyming becomes doggerel, it ceases to be poetry. There is a world of difference between doggerel and nonsense verse such as "higgledy-piggledy," and the ear knows the difference.

Not all children's poetry needs rhyme to delight the ear. Children's own prose is as charming as their natural sense or love of rhymes. They often say spontaneously what a poet might work on for days or weeks. What more delightful description of a tree's being pruned than the four-year-old's exclamation: "Daddy—look. The tree is getting a haircut!" The boy was communicating a discovery through natural poetic expression. He was seeing not only the act but also the significance of that act.

That is why we should all feel a poem coming on, all of us who are about the business of communicating with children. For communicating *is* our business. Without it, there is no teaching, no sharing, no learning, no exchanging of ideas and emotions. And poetry trains children's ears to the cadence of words. It develops sensitivity to the power and the music of language. It turns children *on* to reading.

The vivid sensory images evoked through poetry can instill a desire to read in children. How many times have you heard a child say, "Please, let me do it myself." Let poetry take advantage of this innate quality in children. When they hear you read good poems—poems that have words that laugh, cry, sing, jump, run, and gallop—they will want to read them for themselves. Poetry is the literary wordpath that can take children through the gate to reading.

Poetry has got it all together for children. Poetry and children make a perfect pair—almost as good as peanut butter and jelly.

Why use poetry with children?

What is poetry for children?

When and *how* should we use poetry with children?

Who writes children's poems?

Where do we find good poems for today's visually oriented generation?

Writing (yes, writing) poetry with children.

As we explore together these *Five Ws Plus One* you will find yourselves serving poetry with pleasure, infected with a higher PQ (poetry quotient), and exhilarated by the feeling of a poem coming on—strong!

Why Use Poetry with Children?

> If you were as small
> As a little black ant,
> What would you do
> That big people can't? (*8*)

With all the innovative ideas that the modern curriculum offers and demands, why should we take the time to use poetry with children? Because poetry is the *natural language of children*. Poetry is imagery. And the imagery is what distinguishes poetry from mere verse. Verse is based on observation, poetry on *imagination*. Without imagination a poem never takes wing. It remains a caterpillar on the leaf of reality.

What is imagination? As one earnest child put it when told to use her imagination: "But where is it, teacher? I can't find it anywhere. Maybe I left it on the school bus...."

What is the difference between using observation and imagination? Compare the following rhymes about clouds and jet planes:

Clouds
The clouds are white,
The sky is blue,
The yellow sun
Is shining through

Jets
The jet plane leaves
a vapor trail
across the blue sky.

Sky Circus
Clouds are clowns
Up in the sky,
Rolling and tumbling
As they pass by.

Sky Notes
Jets are pencils
scribbling messages
on a tablet of blue.

— Pauline C. Peck (*10*)

What does each make you see in your mind's eye? Which in each set uses observation; which uses imagination? Which do you think are verse and which poetry?

When Alfred Noyes writes "The moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas," he uses *vivid sensory imagery*. Sensory imagery takes everyday happenings out of the commonplace through the frame of words. And children respond to poetic imagery with enjoyment. When children hear rhymes read aloud, they soon discover that they can hop, skip, gallop, run, clap, walk, jog, or rock to verse as easily as they can to music. The imagery gives the impetus. The child's mind does the rest.

A poem is to feel. Poetry is emotion rather than sheer intellect. We use poetry with children to share emotions such as laughter, joy, fear, love, and sadness:

A Rhino Isn't Cuddly (6)
Now a rhino isn't cuddly,
For it won't fit on your lap.
And I wouldn't want to pet one
Even when it takes a nap!
And a rhino isn't friendly
For I've never seen one smile.

But I'd rather pet a rhino
Than a smiling crocodile!

Tigers (13)
Tigers are striped prowlers
Stalking through the trees.
Looking, peering, sniffing,
Every little breeze.
Hoping for the odor
of some delicious meat.

I'm glad I'm not the dinner
The tiger hopes to eat!

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The Love of a Dog
Puppy love is warm and sweet
Because it's fresh and new,
But it can't compare
To the love of the dog
Who has grown old with you.
—Pauline C. Peck

Timothy's Bad Day (2)
I feel like thunder inside
So I'll bang and crash and rear
And help the rain to pour.
I'll make such a terrible noise
That everybody will say:
"We'd better get out of the way
'Cause Timothy's angry today."*

Poetry is personal. We do not all enjoy the same poems and children will respond differently to various poems. They will show you whether they like a particular poem. Watch for smiles, chuckles, laughter, awe. And when youngsters *really* like a poem, you will often find a pregnant pause after you have read it, and then a spontaneous burst of applause. But the most significant sign will be their request to hear it again. Then you will know you are *really* communicating with your youngsters through poetry.

Poetry is the wind nibbling at your nose, the lure of the silver threads of a spider web, wiggly worms taking a bath in a puddle of rain, dandelions shampooing their hair. Poetry does not usually attempt to explain; it simply *is*.

Poetry is the simplest form of literature. Some educators feel that poetry should be the foundation of all literature teaching. The child's language is poetic; therefore, the language of the poet stirs the child's responses and opens doors to the wonderland of literature.

Kornei Chukovsky deals with the language, the thought processes, and the imagination of the very young. He views the child as an explorer of language with a predilection for verse. His delightful book *From Two to Five (1)* offers many examples of verse for and by children. Most of them are rhymed, for the young child is virtually addicted to rhyme.

Poetry can do many things for youngsters. It can offer pleasure, familiar language, memories, the comfort of a security blanket, amusement, joy, a sense of relaxation and adventure. Children memorize lines from poems—or even whole poems—almost uncon-

* From *Me Is How I Feel* by Stacy Jo Crossen and Natalie Anne Covell. Copyright © 1970 by A. Harris Stone, Stacy Crossen, Natalie Covell, Victoria deLarren. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, E.P. Dutton.

sciously. Do you want a child to remember a precious thought or an important fact? Set it to rhyme, and it will be remembered!

Poetry can lift young spirits. It gives children something to grow on. It helps them to discover and appreciate the many uses of their senses. Poetry challenges children's imagination and stirs them to communicate in interesting ways. For example:

Hungry Wind (11)
The hungry wind in winter
Whistles through the doors.
It sneaks in every tiny crack
And crawls along the floors.
It hides behind the curtains,
Then what do you suppose?
When I'm asleep, it pounces
And nibbles at my nose!

Poetry develops oral fluency. In reading aloud, a speaker gains confidence in his mode of expression, feels the printed word, and interprets it. The listener gains in interpretive skills.

Reading is a multidisciplinary enterprise, and poetry should share in the program. Through using poetry you can unglue kids from their seats, set them in motion, create a vivid image, and above all help them to communicate. Children can learn language through poetry, learn how to communicate their thoughts through language, and turn on to reading. So, put a poem in your plan book as often as possible! A pinch of poetry can add a dash of spice to your teaching.

What Is Poetry for Children?

It's night, late at night. Shadows creep from the corners of the room where you sit. The bird in the covered cage is silent. You feel alone in the dark of the room. The shadows deepen. Unconsciously you listen. The clock in the hall ticks, rhythmically, echoingly. You hear footsteps, footsteps resounding in the silence, coming closer. You hold your breath to hear them. Tap, *tap*; tap, *tap*. A light step, a heavy step, a light step, a heavy step—a pattern, a rhythm. And then you let your breath out in a whoosh of relief. It's Happy, your beloved dog, making his own pattern of sound slowly down the hall. You are not alone after all.

This regular recurrence of accented sounds is rhythm. And that's what poetry is all about. Without rhythm, a singing flow of words, there is no poetry.

Like good conversation, poetry should talk to children. It should communicate; inspire; provoke; inform; tell of things that are, things that were, things that never will be, things that someday might be.

Poetry should express *feelings*. It should communicate emotions. Children should *feel* a poem and they should react to their feelings.

Poetry for children should broaden their horizons. It should stir their thinking processes:

A Crocodile Has Quite a Smile

A crocodile has quite a smile,
A panther has its crouch.
A camel has its long, dry mile,
A kangaroo its pouch.
A rhino has a tough old hide,
An eagle has its nest.
But a kitten has a purr inside,
That's why I like it best!

—Pauline C. Peck

Poetry for children should *introduce them to new ideas:*

The Walking Umbrella (12)

I have an umbrella
That opens so high,
I think my umbrella
Is bigger than I.

Whenever it's raining
I walk down the street
And all people see are
My two little feet.

I have to peek over
Or under the brim,
To see where I'm going
And where I have been!

So if you are out in
The rain you will see,
A walking umbrella
And under it... me!

Poetry for children should *explore their self-concept:*

Myself (9)

Sometimes I feel angry
And sometimes I feel sad.
Sometimes I feel frightened,
And sometimes I feel glad.
But all the time I'm feeling,
I hope you will agree—
I have one feeling that won't change.
I'm happy to be me!

Poetry should help children to probe what poets have to say; it should prepare them for reading other materials; it should be a gate to the world of literature.

When children hear poems their minds, memories, and imaginations should be stretched and expanded. Poetry should have no ceiling. It should help children's thoughts grow into giant concepts.

Poetry should develop communication skills by helping children learn to listen, look, feel, value, judge. It should delight as well as nourish the mind. It should present thought pictures: "Winter may be silver, but Autumn days are gold."

Frequent rhyming is important in poetry for the very young. In the poem *Ice Is Nice (7)* the carrier (important) words rhyme.

Ice Is Nice

A puppy dog likes a bone to chew,
While a robin likes a worm or two.
A tiger cat likes to hunt for mice,
But a polar bear thinks
That ice is nice!

Although not all poems need to rhyme, young children are more attracted to those that do. And nonrhymed poems should paint vivid thought pictures as does Sandburg's *Fog*. Children can picture the fog coming "on little cat feet."

Poems for children should have movement, change of pace, and melodic syllabication. The words and phrases should not be verbal brickbats. They should roll off the tongue. Children should feel the urge to sway, swing, clap, and move to lines such as "We've got freckles on our noses, and there's sand between our toeses."

Poetry for children should begin in wonder and end in delight. Children experiment with concepts. They *wonder* about things: "Where do the ducks go at night?" And the *delight* of a truly surprise ending really stirs youngsters. They love "I'm glad I'm not the dinner the tiger hopes to eat!"

What are poems for children? A good rule of thumb is this: If *you* like a poem, the children will like it too. If *you* don't like it, don't use it. And if you don't trust your PQ (Poetry Quotient), then use your TQ (Teacher Quotient). Anyone who has the love, patience, and desire to spend his days teaching young children has an instinct for what will turn them on!

When and How Should We Use Poetry with Children?

Using poetry with children should be a natural happening. It should be spontaneous. It should be a turn-on, not a turn-off. It should fulfill a need in this computerized world of "progress." Poetry brings

soothing rhythm to speech, multifaceted meaning to words, food for the soul, and a key to open the door to creativity and imagination.

Poetry feeds upon the natural language of children, so use it to build and enrich their vocabularies and concepts. Don't shackle poetry to an art/literature lesson once a week. Don't schedule it for a unit in which your youngsters will "learn all there is to know" about poetry and then breathe a sigh of relief when you feel you have paid your debt to this form of literary art.

Let a poem creep into a lesson like a wandering visitor. Seize the moment. Explore it. Enjoy it. Learn all you can about it with your pupils. Then let it wander on. You might just find it returning at some unexpected moment—and it might return bearing gifts!

Use poems as vocabulary stretchers. Through poetry, help children to learn new words and phrases. Explore them; play with them; roll them off the tongue; master them. Use the new words and phrases to communicate. They should form a bank in children's minds from which they are encouraged to borrow frequently.

Use nursery rhymes. They are a child's first pair of literary shoes. Although most nursery rhymes were not written expressly for children, but had their roots in the satirical or political treatises of their day, don't ignore them. Let children adopt them for their own! Don't let today's generation of youngsters miss out on the language fun of a cow jumping over the moon, even though astronauts have walked on it!

Use favorite songs. Believe it or not, most songs started out as poems. Are your youngsters turned off by the latest hit records? Would they groan and moan if you suddenly decided to play records for an hour? Capitalize on their interest in music. Try reading pop-rock lyrics or folk ballads aloud. Some of them are quite beautiful.

Use poetry as a language arts stimulator. Set the stage by having budding "sheriffs" enliven the room with exciting seasonal posters or otherwise timely handbills. They might read, "Wanted—A Circus Poem" or "Dangerous—A Poem About Sharks" or "Be on the Lookout for—A Poem by John Ciardi."

Let children pantomime poetry. Many poems lend themselves to pantomime. Even the shyest child can usually be drawn into pantomime and from there will bounce right into choral speaking with vivid expression. The first volunteer Marcel Marceau will encourage others to participate.

Try "Discover a Poem" week. Print a poem each day on experience charts, chalkboard, or other media. Children can discover the poem that appeals to them and then illustrate it. Display the illustrations as the poems are read aloud. Be sure children are *aware of the poet who created the poem.* Very few poems are anonymous. You'd be amazed at the number of poems children quite innocently submit as

their own to children's magazines because they have never learned the true author's name. Some of mine have even won awards for children!

Have a special poetry happening. Let children take turns sharing their favorite poems on any subject or by any author. Welcome all poems from nursery rhymes to children's own original creations.

Display provocative pictures. Inspire children to write poems. Have pencils and paper handy to help record their inspirations. For the too-young-to-write but not too-young-to-create, you may have to be the recorder. Or let children from upper grades record the poems. They'll be flattered you asked!

Try writing parodies. Some Mother Goose rhymes are fun subjects for parodies. For instance,

> Old Mother Hubbard
> Went to the cupboard
> To get herself some dinner,
> But all she found was diet Tab,
> And now she's ten pounds thinner!

Above all, don't kill poetry with memorizing, analyzing, and dissecting. Enjoy it. Let poems dart in and out of your children's lives like bright sunbeams.

Integrate poetry with all the disciplines. Don't discriminate against poetry by limiting it to language arts or reading. "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe" can be as helpful in teaching numerical recognition in kindergarten as Alfred Noyes's *The Highwayman* can be to older children in forming values.

Make poetry—good poetry—an integral part of your teaching. Use it as often as it helps you to communicate with your youngsters—once a day, once a week—whenever it blends in with your teaching because teaching is communicating, and poetry communicates!

Who Writes Children's Poems?

Poetry for children has its roots in Mother Goose rhymes, even though they entered the world as political, satirical treatises many years ago. And over the years many major poets have contributed valuable and enduring poems for children.

Today there are excellent poets who write almost exclusively for children. They communicate seeds of thought that may some day blossom into new fruits of the future.

See the annotated bibliography at the conclusion of this article. It will help you to sip just one drop from the poetry well, for there are so many drops to be sipped.

Where Do We Find Good Poetry for Children?

Take a trip to the library—any library—the smallest in your school or the largest in a nearby city. You will find illustrated poetry books and anthologies galore. "Let your fingers do the walking" through the yellow pages of the phone book. The yellow pages list bookstores that carry all kinds of poetry books for children.

Read the literary arts section of your newspaper carefully, especially around Book Week, and you'll find reviews of children's poetry books. Some of the titles may tempt you to draw from the literary well—"What a Wonderful Bird the Frog Are," "Sung under the Silver Umbrella," "The Birds and the Beasts Were There," "Poems about Fur and Feather Friends," "The Flashlight," "At the Top of My Voice."

Check your basal readers, workbooks, and the teacher's editions. Many of them incorporate good poetry for children in their materials.

Poetry and rhymes are frequently used in materials for preschoolers. D'Audney's recent *Calendar of Developmental Activities for Preschoolers (3)* incorporates a number of contemporary rhymes to be used in creative learning situations.

Other good sources of poetry for youngsters are teachers' magazines such as *Early Years, Teacher, Instructor.* And many children's magazines usually carry poems—some even written by youngsters themselves! Although they may not win a Pulitzer Prize, they are important because they are examples of kids communicating with kids. *Jack and Jill, Humpty Dumpty, Highlights, Cricket, Ebony Jr.* all carry poems *for* and *by* children. *My Weekly Reader,* the children's newspaper used in many schools in the United States, carries poems in the children's edition as well as in the teacher's edition.

So try a pinch of poetry in your teaching. You may soon find your children will have a "peck of poetry" to draw upon from the magic storehouse of their minds.

And after you have shared good poems with your students, try writing poetry *with* them.

Writing (Yes, Writing) Poetry with Children

If your children are willing to try writing poetry, you have passed the test. You have interested them. You have shared the joys of poetry. And do let your youngsters express themselves in whatever way they wish, including rhymed and unrhymed prose that has a poetic flow. You'll find yourself learning a great deal about your children. You'll learn that they frequently think in pairs, often opposites: "Rain is a pain, but sun is fun!" The mother who said to her

child, "Wear your scarf, Sandy. It's raw out." used a perfectly common adult phrase. When Sandy responded, "When will it be cooked?" she was thinking in logical opposites.

In writing poetry with children you will find yourself receiving a ton of ore. But from each ton a child digs from the depths of his or her thoughts, you can pan a few flakes of precious gold. As children express their thoughts in verse, they will learn something about themselves. And so will you.

Try Giving Children Starter-Uppers

Toss out two lines that need a rhyming word for completion. Sometimes children can complete a thought even before you finish expressing it.

Up in the tree
Sat a buzzy, fuzzy _____

Little fishes in the brook,
Won't you nibble at my _____?

I thought I saw a pussy cat
Sleeping on a yellow _____ _____

Flitter, flutter butterfly
Soaring in the morning _____

You'll find that children will supply more words than the seemingly obvious rhyming one the starter-upper calls for. They may supply an unrhyming, nonsense, or coined word. Accept *all* responses. The words don't have to rhyme or make sense. What is important is that the children listened and responded. And don't force all children to take part. Some may prefer to do their own thing from scratch.

Try Haiku

Haiku originated in Japan. It consists of three lines and usually deals with nature and/or the seasons. The first line has five syllables, the second has seven, and the third has five. Share several examples of haiku with the class, then invite students to try writing it. Don't demand that they conform to the syllabication pattern if they have created a thought of their own. One child wrote a beautiful three-line thought and the teacher who read it discarded it because the second line had only six syllables. That teacher threw out the baby with the bath water.

Help children to use meaningful words and vivid expressions as

they try writing haiku. The words they choose will suggest how they feel about something.

Winter
Snowflakes from the sky
Drifting slowly to the ground,
A blanket of white.
—Pauline C. Peck

A Rainbow
A morning rainbow
Near the sun and winter clouds
Surprises the day.
—Virginia H. Niles (5)

Try Tanka

Tanka are related to haiku. They run slightly longer and are usually associated with the seasons. The five lines of tanka follow a pattern of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. But they can be five short lines without any specific number of syllables. Tanka are more of a challenge to older children.

Try Cinquains

The original cinquain created by Adelaide Crapsey consists of five lines. The five lines have a syllabication pattern of 2-4-6-8-2. However, most people who use cinquains with children follow a slightly different pattern. *Line 1* - one-word title; *Line 2* - two verbs about the title; *Line 3* - three words expressing feeling or action; *Line 4* - two words describing the title word; *Line 5* - repeat the title word, or use a synonym. A cinquain can be about any subject.

Roller coaster
Climbs, dips,
Zips, zaps, zips,
Fast, scary
Fun ride.

There are many kinds of poetry to try writing with your youngsters—from rhymed to unrhymed. Whichever form you choose, keep in mind that poetry should speak naturally and simply about things.

Spread poetry on the bread of all your teaching. You'll find your youngsters relishing their learning diet. And as you plan each day's teaching menu, you may feel a poem coming on, strong! Above all, you will be communicating with your youngsters in an exciting way. And, you'll be tuning them in to and turning them on to reading.

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Career Idea: Meet the Poet at His Craft

Sue Nugent Reed
Congers, New York, Elementary School

Congers Elementary School is located in Rockland County, a suburban area approximately forty-five minutes' driving distance from the heart of New York City. Coming largely from white, middle-class homes, the pupil population consists of approximately 530 children in grades kindergarten through six. Parents work in a wide variety of fields and hold such positions as executives in large corporations, construction workers, telephone linesmen, and owners of small businesses. Most of the teachers use a traditional style of teaching and place a heavy emphasis on reading and mathematics.

In December 1973, when I was appointed to the position of principal at Congers Elementary School, the fifth grade classes were concluding a career education unit on journalism. Three teachers in the school had attended a series of district seminars on career education. As no further plans had been made by the district to continue this program, I decided to write a proposal to secure funds to continue the work begun in career education and to apply for a New York State minigrant.

Launching the Program

After receiving the minigrant for my proposal, *Meet the Artist at His Craft: Career Idea*, I met with the teachers of the fifth grade to explain the purpose of the program and make plans for the selection of persons to be included. The teachers recommended a weaver-dyer and an ecological folksinger. While these people were being contacted, I was notified that I had been offered a matching grant from the New York State Poet in the School Program. As the minigrant funds were nearly depleted, this was, to say the least, a serendipitous windfall.

The poet would work with three classes, in residence, for six and one-half days. As we had three fifth grade classes who had recently completed a unit on journalism, it was agreed that they would work with the poet. Objectives of the career education program for pupils and teachers were established as follows:

Objectives for Pupils

1. To broaden children's awareness of career opportunities.
2. To bring children into one-to-one contact with persons in the fine arts and humanities.
3. To provide an opportunity for children to express their personal interests in career possibilities.
4. To develop in children an awareness of the library as a tool and a vehicle for extending their information regarding careers.

Objectives for Teachers

1. To participate in the selection of persons to participate in the career education program.
2. To meet with guest artists to draw plans for class or group lessons.
3. To implement plans for lessons and carry out follow up procedures as required.
4. To gather data and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

It was axiomatic that a program such as this would be difficult to evaluate as there would be no statistics nor any "yes" or "no" answers to give us any hard and fast data from which we could draw definitive conclusions. Unfortunately, at this time, we are unable to measure how much or how well someone has learned through "infusion" or how much more "aware" a pupil has become. Accepting these limitations, we launched our program.

In an attempt at evaluation, children were given questionnaires, both before and after the program, asking them to describe how they would like to live when they became adults. Pupils were asked to tell about one day on which they would be going to work. The second question asked them to describe the second job they would choose should they be unable to have their first choice. The third and final question asked for a description of how they would spend their time relaxing after work.

From the first two questions one can see that the responses would be given in the form of a narrative description of the child's career. The final question would reveal any possible connection between work and relaxation activities.

Purpose of the Program

Briefly, the idea behind this program was to develop activities to provide fifth graders with an opportunity to meet persons in fields of work which are generally not considered to be in children's everyday realms of experience. The goal was to broaden children's awareness of career possibilities. At the elementary school level, children traditionally have been introduced to policepersons, firefighters, dentists, teachers, and nurses as people in the world of work. We saw no reason for maintaining this limitation and, knowing that children are very curious and eager to learn, we decided to launch the program. It was expected that the children would learn the career education concepts from indirect infusion rather than from direct teaching.

The reason for including a poet in the career education program is self-evident. How often have we met or worked with a poet? Not an everyday occurrence, to say the least. It was our hope that this experience would extend the children's ideas about poets, poetry, and writing.

The Program

The director of the Poet in the Schools program and the county coordinator worked out the details for setting up the poet's residency. I interviewed the poet who was recommended and set up a schedule in which he would meet with three classes per day and also hold a daily workshop with the teachers. The poet would also be responsible for selecting those poems which were to be included in the final anthology to be produced for the children and the school library. Each child would therefore see his or her work in print.

The poet's purpose was more specific. He expressed the desire to convey to the children the concept that words and language are alive, that words can change and bend depending on how they are used. He wanted the children to develop a keener sense of their own feelings, to realize that in poetry there are color, emotions, and ideas. He wanted to eradicate the notion that all poems must rhyme. Although he did not emphasize spelling or grammar, he maintained that, as children begin to take pride in their own writing, they concomitantly become more concerned about correct grammar and spelling. He expressed the belief that children's self-respect is enhanced as a result of programs such as this and that children begin to develop a more valid view of the world. He felt that through their poetry the children create their own words, vocabularies, and worlds. These were the ideas expressed by Bill Wertheim, our poet-in-residence, as he spoke to a staff writer who was interviewing us for a feature article in a local newspaper.

In a personable, warm, low-keyed manner, Wertheim skillfully led the children into writing poetry. His first lesson introduced them to the "I" in twentieth century American writing, emphasizing the fact that a poet must use his five senses keenly if he or she is to express his ideas and images clearly, succinctly, and honestly. Relating to the poems he read to the children, such as D.H. Lawrence's "Trees In a Garden" and Emily Dickinson's "I Never Saw a Moor," Wertheim discussed the power of the use of simple language, breaking up lines of poetry and creating images.

The figure of a skeleton in one of the classrooms evoked a lesson about death. Wertheim wrote, "The discussion went from Halloween to skeletons, to fear of skeletons, to monsters, to dying: loss of something and/or someone we love. How it feels to die, how it feels to lose someone you care about." He indicated that the topic first was discussed aloud, then later on paper. For those children who preferred an alternative topic, he suggested writing about coming back to life. Wertheim said it was the most touching lesson he had ever taught and that some children cried. This led to a discussion about crying, trust, and kindness. He took this opportunity to express the idea that "Crying is OK, even for boys." He said that the children were kind and supportive of one another.

Nature, photographs, dreams, and music were used in subsequent lessons to stimulate the imagination. A wide variety of poems were written in response to the music of Elizabethan dances, a string quartet of Shostakovich, and a Japanese flute.

Hundreds of poems were written by the seventy-eight children who participated in the program and were reviewed by Wertheim and the teachers. A parent volunteer prepared the final draft of the manuscript of selected poems for the anthology. As Bill Wertheim made his last goodbyes, two fifth grade girls ran up and asked him to return to Congers school. They were sad to see him leave. After spending the past six days sharing their innermost feelings with him, it was difficult to let this newly found poet-friend go.

Wertheim later described his work with the children in a letter to me saying, "They were alert, perceptive, intelligent, and sensitive and gave me much more feedback than I had expected. They would certainly benefit from continued creative projects, of whatever nature...."

The children with whom he interacted have continued to write poetry, trying many new forms including sonnets, haiku, cinquain, and free verse.

During the following summer, copies of the anthology were collated, placed in the school library, and sent to the poet and the director of the program. In the fall, each child in the program received a copy.

Early in the fall I received a call from the director of the program asking if one of our pupils was still in the school, as she had been selected as one of four pupil-poets to represent New York State at a subcommittee hearing with Senator Peter Peyser in Washington. The purpose of the hearing was to seek refunding of this program through the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities.

Ilka Shuman's parents were delighted with the news and were proud to have her participate. Upon her return, Ilka told of her experience at a faculty meeting and later at an assembly program for the fifth and sixth grades. At that time she was presented with a certificate of merit for her outstanding work, now permanently recorded in the Congressional Record. At the faculty meeting, Ilka's teachers were visibly touched by this twelve-year-old's intellect and poise.

During the winter, a former member of the board of education, and a published poet in her own right, offered to donate a copy of her poems to our school library. After the volume was formally presented to the president of the student council, the gesture was returned by presenting her with our anthology of children's poetry. She was thoroughly surprised and proud of our achievement.

This year, as there were no funds from a minigrant, the Parent Teacher Association voted to match the funds for another poet in residence. Support for such a program is extremely significant as it represents a respect for the need for learning in the area of the arts and humanities. This year the poet will spend a six and one-half day residency teaching the writing of poetry to three third grade classes. It is hoped that there will be a poet-in-residence at Congers every year.

Evaluation

As was previously mentioned, the pre and post questionnaires were so constructed as to evoke responses which would indicate the pupils' first and second career choices and indicate how the pupils would spend their leisure time. The latter question was included to determine whether there was any connection between career choice and leisure choice. A comparison between pre and post questionnaires might also reveal any changes in career choices as a result of class discussion about careers or from the emergence of a heightened awareness. An evaluation sheet including the names of each visitor was also distributed to each pupil.

In comparing the pre and post narrative responses to the questions, it was interesting to note that there was little or no change in pupils' career choices. In very few instances (6 out of 78) was there any similarity between the choice of work and the form of relaxation. The large majority of pupils included eating, drinking, watching

television, and sleeping, in that order, as their chosen forms of relaxation.

A random sampling of first and second choices for careers follows:

First Choice	*Second Choice*
ranch hand	horse rancher
architect	doctor
model	nurse
carpenter	electrician
teacher	secretary
female jockey	veterinarian
secretary	waitress
stewardess	waitress
stock car driver	hunting guide
vet	mother
artist	teacher
dental technician	architect
singer	teacher
football player	baseball player
beautician	waitress
assist old folks	clothing salesperson

The choices for careers covered a wide spectrum and remained consistent when the same question was answered six months later.

Pupils were asked to evaluate each of the guest speakers: poet, folksinger, weaver-dyer, nurse, and advertising manager. The three top choices were the poet, nurse, and advertising manager, in that order. In all fairness to the others, it must be restated that the poet had the advantage of a six and one-half day residency with the pupils while the other visitors had only a single, forty-five minute lesson. The nurse and the advertising manager had the advantage of being well known to many of the pupils, as they were both parents of pupils in the fifth grade. These factors must not be overlooked as having had a positive effect on the children's receptivity. Some of the pupils, never having heard of medieval music before, stated that the songs sung by the folksinger were "babyish." Some expressed a similar reaction to the weaver-dyer, but were very interested in the two-month-old baby lamb which she allowed each child to hold and pet.

Each of the seventy-eight pupils answered "yes" when asked whether this career education program should be continued next year. When asked to suggest people that they would be interested in meeting, pop singers, athletes, and astronauts headed the list.

It was surprising and pleasant to note that one pupil added a statement that a promise had been made to give each child the book of poems at the end of the program and that this had not been done. It was very reassuring to read that a child was looking forward to receiving the anthology that was in the process of being produced.

In the teachers' evaluations, the poet, weaver-dyer, and advertising manager were rated as the top three most effective visiting teachers. One teacher indicated that she would have preferred that the poet omit the lesson on death as she felt that it had had an adverse effect on some pupils. Two teachers indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to observe another teacher in action. Each teacher indicated that he felt the program was worthwhile and, as a result, a resource file of volunteer parents was established.

Parents supported the program and, during an executive board meeting of the Parent Teacher Association, one parent stated that she felt that death should not have been chosen as a topic for discussion. A lively discussion ensued and a number of mothers felt that no one had ever broached this subject when they were children. They felt that it was healthier for the children to discuss death openly. The ultimate support for the program was expressed by the parents' unanimous vote to set aside funds for the matching grant to have a poet-in-residence teacher for three third grades in the spring.

Although it is difficult to assess whether the pupils are now more aware of a wider variety of careers, it was felt that many other positive benefits resulted and the program was considered to be successful. The following year we received a grant from the National Humanities Faculty for a two and one-half day inservice teacher training workshop in career education.

The enthusiastic response to the Poet in the Schools program from pupils, teachers, parents, and community is what moved me to share our experience with others. When we began we did not expect to send a pupil to a congressional hearing in Washington, nor the principal to the Sixth IRA World Congress on Reading in Singapore, nor did we expect to receive another grant from the National Humanities Faculty. Perhaps you would enjoy having a poet in residence at your school? Why not? As Byron so aptly put it "... for a man's reach should always exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for?"

A Strategy for Improving Teenagers' Understanding and Appreciation of Poetry

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Anyone who likes poetry and has taught poetry to elementary school children can attest to the fact that young children respond most enthusiastically to poetry, song, and verse and that the teaching of poetry can aid in the development of the child as a thinking and feeling human being. When a teacher is able to strike a balance between overteaching or overanalysis and underteaching or lack of direction in dealing with poetry, children are able to identify with the words of poets and view reading and listening to poetry as worthwhile activities.

If this is true, then why do so many secondary students shun poetry and exhibit a strong dislike for this type of literature? What happens to their attitudes between childhood and adolescence? And what happens to the way poetry is taught at the secondary level?

It is the premise of the authors that children maintain enthusiasm about poetry as long as it is enjoyable to them. Once the teaching of poetry becomes mechanical, didactic, or just plain boring, their reaction is to turn away.

Reeves (*4*) says

> The seventh or eighth grade age seems to be a crucial one in the appreciation of poetry. Most grade school children seem to love poems.... Yet most high school students hate poetry. They often feel that it is "sissy stuff," or dull, or meaningless, or all of these. Although the reasons for this change in attitude are complex and numerous, one reason no doubt is that during the seventh and eighth grades, the children encounter poetry that does not appeal to them—often taught in a way that does not appeal to them.

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In the teaching of poetry at the secondary level, it is not uncommon for instruction to consist of whole class, teacher directed discussion. Whole class discussion limits the opportunities of students to interact verbally with the teacher and with other students. Limited student involvement is a contributing factor in creating disinterest and apathy toward poetry.

Active student involvement and participation in the discussion of poetry can be encouraged through the development of small group activities that avoid overanalysis yet provide the direction necessary for understanding and appreciation. The teacher's responsibility is to provide a structure that will increase the individual student's opportunities to converse in order to develop and expand concepts through peer interaction within a small group.

Herber (*2*) has developed a model for reading and reaction guides. This model can be used by teachers to organize guides that provide a structure for the discussion of poetry in small groups. The guides promote understanding by leading students through three levels of comprehension.

According to Herber, comprehension is the end product of levels of cognition which evolve into one another, each level building on the preceding one. These levels are categorized as literal, interpretive, and applied or creative.

At the literal level, readers decode words, determine what each means in the given context, and recognize the relationship among the words in order to determine what the author has said.

Understanding what the author has said, however, does not ensure that the reader understands what the author means. The interpretive level of comprehension is applied to what the author has said in order to derive meaning from his statements. The reader generalizes relationships among various details and is able to give meaning to these relationships by interpreting their significance and their bearing on other thoughts expressed by the author.

At the applied or creative level of comprehension, the products of the literal and interpretive levels interact with concepts which the reader has developed from his previous experiences and observations related to the topic. The result of this interaction between the reader's previous experience and the meanings generated by the selection is the development of new concepts which extend beyond those immediately identifiable in the reading (*3*).

The following reading and reaction guides were developed to structure the learning experiences of students reading Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem "Richard Cory." They provide instruction in the three levels of comprehension as defined by Herber, guiding the students to explore words and ideas without mechanical dissection of the poem.

After dividing the class into groups of four or five, the teacher introduces the poem and reads it orally to the class. This is, perhaps, the most crucial point in the lesson, since it is the teacher's overt interest and enthusiasm that motivate students to pursue the poem to fuller understanding and appreciation.

Copies of the poem are supplied to the students, who are invited to read the poem silently while the reading guide is being distributed. The purpose of this guide is to help students gain an understanding of the poem at the literal and interpretive levels of comprehension and to prepare them for active participation in group discussion.

The teacher determines the amount of time to be spent by individual students reacting to the guide. Fifteen to twenty minutes would be appropriate in a forty-five minute class period. While students are working with the guide, the teacher is free to circulate among the groups, offering assistance.

After the students have responded individually to the guide, they discuss their responses within the groups, exchanging ideas and feelings elicited by the items on the guide. The teacher moves from group to group offering support and guidance and gaining an awareness of student viewpoints.

The teacher should spend the last few minutes identifying, for the whole class, some of the divergent viewpoints that emerged from the group discussions. The class should be reassured that the purpose of the discussions was to explore ideas rather than formulate conclusions. This summary helps to set the stage for subsequent activities.

During the next lesson, the teacher can introduce a consideration of the difference between the literal and interpretive levels of comprehension by reference to the divergent viewpoints expressed in the previous discussions. The reaction guide can be used with small groups to assist the students in developing their abilities to think about the poem at the interpretive and applied levels of comprehension. Students discuss their reactions to the statements, proverbs, and sayings in the guide and gain experience interacting with the poem at the applied level of comprehension. These activities facilitate the application of personal experience to the concepts developed in the poem and result in the generation of new concepts which go beyond those presented in the guides. These new concepts can be expressed by the students in the form of new statements or additional proverbs or sayings. An exchange of new ideas generated by the various groups culminates the lesson.

The vocabulary extension guide involves students in a consideration of selected vocabulary items in an interesting manner. Unlike many traditional isolated vocabulary exercises, the guide helps students explore new words in the context of their previous

experiences with the poem. This involvement is consistent with Goodman and Niles' statement (*1*) that vocabulary develops in direct ratio to the experiences and interests of the learner.

It is not recommended that this guide be used immediately following the other guides. It is more appropriately used at a later time to initiate a review of the poem in which the attributes of Richard Cory can be compared and contrasted to those of characters in other poems and stories.

It is not suggested that all three guides must be used with the poem. It may occur that only one or two of the guides would be appropriately used or that different guides could be used at the same time with different groups according to the ability of the students to respond at the three levels of comprehension.

The use of reading and reaction guides as a strategy in the teaching of poetry encourages active student participation in a small group setting. Only in small groups can students have sufficient opportunities to present ideas and respond to the ideas of others.

The guides provide a structure that leads the students through the three levels of comprehension in a manner that nurtures divergent thinking and active involvement. Overanalysis is avoided, yet students are provided with experiences which contribute to their understanding of poetry.

Increased understanding and personal involvement generate interest and enthusiasm so that reading poetry can be appreciated as a relevant and enjoyable experience.

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Reading Guide

Directions: This guide is intended to help you understand the poem and to prepare you for active participation in group discussion. Follow the directions for each item. Time may not allow you to explore all the possibilities suggested by each item. It is your responsibility to make a commitment about your responses and be prepared to support them in group discussion.

1. Column A contains words that are found in the poem. Column B contains synonyms for these words. Write the letter of the word in Column B that is a synonym for the word in Column A.

A	B
___pavement	a. wonderfully
___clean-favored	b. sidewalk
___slim	c. in short
___arrayed	d. trained
___human	e. courteous
___admirably	f. manners
___schooled	g. thin
___every grace	h. good-looking
___in fine	i. dressed

2. Check the words from the poem that suggest the idea of royalty.

___crown	___arrayed	___grace
___clean-favored	___calm	___fine
___imperially	___glittered	___light
___human	___king	___rich

3. The author used words like those you have checked in number two to
   a. make Richard Cory seem mysterious.
   b. tell us that Richard Cory is really like a king.
   c. show us what money can do.

4. Check the statements that say what the author actually says in the poem.
   ___Richard Cory was always well-dressed.
   ___The people were jealous of Richard Cory.
   ___Richard Cory was not very friendly.
   ___Richard Cory was mayor of the town.
   ___Richard Cory was a true gentleman.

5. Check the statements that tell what the author *means* in the poem. Be prepared to tell why you checked or didn't check each statement.
   ___The people in the poem worked hard, but made little money.
   ___Richard Cory killed himself because he didn't have any friends.
   ___The people thought that Richard Cory was happier than they were.
   ___Richard Cory was better off than most people.

6. The speaker's tone of voice is
   a. shocked
   b. matter of fact
   c. sad

7. The central purpose of the poem is to
   a. tell a story
   b. make us laugh
   c. make us think
   d. other _____

Reaction Guide

1. Directions: Check the statements below that the people of the town might have said. Be prepared to tell why they might have said each statement. Add any other statements you think they might have said.
   - ___I sure wish I had his money.
   - ___I wouldn't trade places with him for anything.
   - ___There's something kind of strange about Richard Cory.
   - ___Richard Cory's the kind of guy you can really trust.
   - ___Let's ask Richard Cory to join our bowling team.
2. Directions: Place a check next to those items with which you agree. Be prepared to support your answers. Supply additional statements or proverbs that can be appropriately related to the poem.
   - ___The poem is a story about one individual's unhappiness.
   - ___The speaker is a sympathetic person.
   - ___Richard Cory's fate makes the speaker feel better about his own life.
   - ___The unstated meaning of the poem is a concern for all of us.
   - ___People begrudge others what they cannot have themselves.
   - ___Don't judge a book by its cover.

Vocabulary Extension Guide

Directions: In the poem, Richard Cory is described as a gentleman, while the person telling the poem describes the people of the town as working people. Column II below contains a list of words. If you think the word might describe Richard Cory, write the word under his name in Column I. If the word seems to relate to the people, write it in Column III. You may want to use a word to describe both Richard Cory and the people. In this case, simply write the word in both Column I and Column III. Or, you may decide that a word does not accurately describe or relate to either choice. Indicate this by circling the word in Column II. Be prepared to tell why you used each word in the list to describe Richard Cory or the people, or both, or none.

Column I	Column II	Column III
Richard Cory		**The People**
	sensitive	
	conservative	
	aggressive	
	enigmatic	
	resigned	
	garrulous	
	aloof	
	suspicious	
	sarcastic	
	composed	
	resourceful	
	pathetic	
	cordial	

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